



Evaluation study of the implementation of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability

Final report

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Written by Coffey, AND, SQW, Edater and SPEED
November 2016

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Evaluation study of the implementation of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability

Final report

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Evaluation study of the implementation of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability

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Table of Contents

0.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	IX
1.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1.	Purpose of the evaluation study	1
1.2.	Scope of the evaluation.....	2
1.3.	Methodology.....	2
1.4.	Evaluation study questions	5
2.	BACKGROUND TO THE EIP AND IMPLEMENTATION STATE OF PLAY.....	8
2.1.	General context	8
2.2.	Overview of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Sustainability and Productivity and its intervention logic	9
2.3.	Relationship with the CAP, Horizon 2020 and other policies	15
2.4.	EIP implementation at EU level	20
2.5.	EIP implementation at national and regional level.....	26
2.6.	Countries not implementing the EIP.....	58
3.	ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION STUDY QUESTIONS.....	60
3.1.	Validity and limitations.....	63
3.2.	Theme 1 – Internal coherence and relevance of EIP-related elements in RDPs	63
3.3.	Theme 2 – Effectiveness and efficiency of EIP implementation through RDPs	75
3.4.	Theme 3 – EU added value of the EIP network, effectiveness and efficiency of EU level and national networks	94
3.5.	Theme 4 – External coherence of the EIP with other policies	123
4.	OVERALL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	145
4.1.	Overall conclusions.....	145
4.2.	Recommendations	147
	ANNEX A: TABLES AND SUPPORTING DATA	159
	ANNEX B: CASE STUDY SUMMARIES	191

List of tables

Table 1: Overview of the scope of the evaluation study	2
Table 2: Overview of evaluation questions	6
Table 3: Total RDPs, RDPs that support EIP OGs	27
Table 4: Funding and targets for the six common priorities	28
Table 5: EIP typology	34
Table 6: Measures used to programme for EIP OGs	36
Table 7: Financial resources and envisaged spending on the EIP (note that n/a indicates where information was not available)	38
Table 8: The role of national / regional Rural Networks in a sample of 37 RDPs	50
Table 9: Cross-border arrangements	56
Table 10: Case study sample.....	61
Table 11: Judgement criteria and indicators for Evaluation Question 1	65
Table 12: Judgement criteria and indicators for Evaluation Question 2	76
Table 13: Judgement criteria and indicators for Evaluation Question 3	96
Table 14: Judgement criteria and indicators for Evaluation Question 4	111
Table 15: Judgement criteria and indicators for Evaluation Question 5	124
Table 16: The Commission’s seven flagship initiatives.....	126
Table 17 – Innovation Union commitment 29: progress, key developments and challenges ahead	128
Table 18 – EIP’s aims and actions	129
Table 19 – The EIP in H2020 literature	131
Table 20 – Agriculture and forestry related priorities in H2020 2015 call	132
Table 21 – Agriculture and forestry related priorities in H2020 2016-7 call	133
Table 22 – The EIP common format for practitioners – structure	134
Table 23 – Number and type of projects published under the EIP common format for practitioners	136
Table 24: Focus Groups 2013-2016 (section 2.4.4 Key tasks of the EIP network).....	159
Table 25: Workshops, seminars and other activities organised by the EIP network 2013-2016 (section 2.4.4 Key tasks of the EIP network).....	160
Table 26: Innovation brokerage function by typology (section 2.5.2 Countries and regions implementing the EIP, iii Arrangements regarding innovation brokerage services)	161
Table 27: Beneficiaries supported (section 2.5.2 Countries and regions implementing the EIP, vi Beneficiaries supported)	163
Table 28: Outputs and implementation status (section 2.5.2 Countries and regions implementing the EIP, viii Outcomes of first calls and implementation status).....	168
Table 29 – Documentary coherence according to the typology	173
Table 30 - Level of coherence between the needs identified in the RDPs and the topics of the projects already started.....	175
Table 31 – Level of coherence between the RDPs (needs assessment and strategic priorities) and the expected implementation of the EIP in the MS/region where projects are not yet started, based on interviews with Managing Authorities.....	178
Table 32 – Perceived relevance of the EIP according to key innovation actors	183
Table 33 – VCS choices and selected research project	184
Table 34: Agriculture and forestry related priorities in H2020 2015 call.....	186
Table 35: Multi-actor projects (MA) and thematic networks (TN) funded under H2020 2014 and 2015 calls.....	187

List of figures

Figure 1: The three 'steps' of the evaluation study and the logical relationship between them	3
Figure 2: EIP intervention logic.....	14
Figure 3: Strategic fit of the EIP and the Horizon 2020 programme	18
Figure 4: European rural networking structures	20
Figure 5: Composition of the Rural Networks' Assembly	21
Figure 6: Main Service Point functions	23
Figure 7: Number of planned EIP OGs in the approved RDPs (2014 – 2020).....	31
Figure 8: Online survey - Ways in which the NRNs have supported EIP	115

Abbreviations and acronyms

AKIS	Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CMO	Common Market Organisation
CSA	Communication and Support Actions
DG AGRI	Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EFA	Environmental Focus Area
EIP	European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Sustainability and Productivity
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
EU	European Union
FG	Focus Group
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
LAG	Local Action Group
MFF	Multi-annual Financial Framework
MS	Member State
NRN	National Rural Networks
NSU	National Support Units
OG	Operational Group
RD	Rural Development
RDP	Rural Development Programme
RRN	Regional Rural Network
SCAR	Standing Committee on Agricultural Research
ToR	Terms of Reference

ABSTRACT

This report is an evaluation study of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP), as implemented in 96 out of 111 Rural Development Programmes across 26 Member States.

The evaluation found that the EIP's premise on incentivising innovative farming practices to foster a competitive and sustainable agriculture and forestry sector is seen as valid and important. Innovation actors, especially farmers and forest managers, emphasised a need for projects linking research and practice. The EIP is found to be a flexible tool that is addressing this in a way that can be adapted to divergent circumstances and policy contexts. Farmers are more likely to become involved in the innovation process under the EIP as compared with other funding streams for innovation in the agricultural sector.

To help improve EIP implementation over time, the evaluation made recommendations. The EIP's effectiveness could be increased by: making better use of multiplication actors; by simplifying national and regional administrative implementation and by adapting rules at European level to incentivise participation (e.g. enabling advance payments). By reducing fragmentation and improving knowledge flows, the EIP provides a crucial opportunity to build coherent national / regional agricultural knowledge and innovation systems (AKISs). These should be interlinked into an integrated EU-wide AKIS.

EXTRAIT

Ce rapport présente l'étude d'évaluation du Partenariat européen d'innovation pour la productivité et le développement durable de l'agriculture (ci-après PEI), mis en œuvre par 96 des 111 Programmes de Développement Rural dans 26 États membres.

L'évaluation a révélé que le principe du PEI, visant à développer et disséminer des pratiques agricoles innovantes dans l'objectif d'encourager une agriculture et une sylviculture durables et compétitives, est considéré comme pertinent et important pour ces secteurs. Les acteurs de l'innovation, en particulier les agriculteurs et les gestionnaires forestiers, ont souligné la nécessité de développer des projets qui rapprochent la recherche et la pratique. Le PEI est perçu comme un outil versatile qui répond à ce besoin de façon flexible et peut être adapté à des circonstances et des contextes politiques différents. Il apparaît que les agriculteurs sont plus susceptibles de s'impliquer dans le processus d'innovation tel que conçu dans le cadre du PEI, que par le biais d'autres initiatives de financement pour l'innovation dans le secteur agricole.

Afin d'améliorer la mise en œuvre du PEI dans le moyen et long terme, l'évaluation propose une série de recommandations à cet effet. Ainsi, l'efficacité du PEI pourrait être accrue par: une meilleure utilisation de multiplicateurs; la simplification de la mise en œuvre administrative du PEI aux niveaux national et régional; l'adaptation des règles au niveau européen afin d'encourager la participation (par exemple en permettant les paiements anticipés). En réduisant la fragmentation et améliorant les flux de connaissance, le PEI présente l'opportunité d'établir des systèmes de connaissance et d'innovation en agriculture (SCIA/AKIS) cohérents au niveau national / régional. Ces derniers devraient être interconnectés par le biais d'un SCIA/AKIS intégré au niveau européen.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and scope

This executive summary presents the **evaluation study of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP)** that was conducted in 2016 for Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) of the European Commission (EC) by Coffey International Development (Coffey) in partnership with AND International, Edater, SQW and SPEED.

The **objective** of this evaluation study was to examine the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value of the two main aspects of the EIP, namely the EIP as implemented by Member States and regions in particular through the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs); and the support for the EIP provided by the EIP network.

The **EIP** was launched in 2012 and aims to foster a competitive and sustainable agricultural and forestry sector that "achieves more from less". It takes into account the complex nature of innovation, which depends not only on the solidity of a creative idea, but also on crucial, interrelated factors such as the willingness of the sector to take it up, the cost-effectiveness of practical application, knowledge and perceptions, etc. In this way, a real innovation can be defined as "**an idea put into practice with success**".

The EIP brings together innovation actors (farmers, advisors, researchers, businesses, NGOs, etc.) and helps to build bridges between research and practice. To speed up the process of developing and applying novel approaches, the EIP uses an overarching concept based on the "**interactive innovation model**": actors with complementary knowledge (practical, entrepreneurial, scientific, etc.) work together in projects to develop solutions / opportunities, make them ready to implement in practice and disseminate the outcomes broadly.

The EIP has a Member State component and an EU level component, both supported under pillar II of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The Member State component funds innovation actors (farmers, advisors, researchers, businesses, NGOs, etc.) within the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) in the form of **Operational Groups (OGs)**. OGs are targeted innovation projects that tackle specific practical issues and opportunities according to the needs of the agricultural and forestry sector. The composition of an OG is tailored to the objectives of the specific project and will vary from project to project. They can be made up of - for instance - farmers, farmers' organisations, advisors, researchers, NGOs, businesses or anyone else who is well placed to help realise the project's goals.

The EU component consists of the **EIP network**, which aims to connect OGs, facilitate the exchange of knowledge, expertise and good practices and to establish a dialogue between the farming and the research community. The network is run by the European Commission (DG AGRI) with the help of the Service Point. The Service Point team facilitates the networking activities, organises a help desk function, EIP website and database, events and the production and dissemination of publications.

EU research and innovation policy (through Horizon 2020) plays a key role in the EIP by providing funding for actions according to the interactive innovation model (so-called demand driven "multi-actor projects") and its focus to connect actors beyond Member States' borders. This is particularly important because actions under the RDPs implemented by Member States and regions are normally applied within the boundaries of the programming area. **Other policies** can offer additional opportunities for cooperation and implementation of the interactive innovation model.

Approach and limitations

The rationale and objectives of this evaluation study are **primarily formative**, i.e. to describe, analyse and assess the implementation of the EIP (in particular through Operational Groups set up under RDPs, and through the EIP network). The purpose is to identify strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and thereby generate evidence to inform a possible adjustment of the policy.

The **research sought to answer** a set of five evaluation questions spread across four themes. These themes were internal coherence and relevance; effectiveness and efficiency; EU added value of the EIP network, effectiveness and efficiency of the EU level and national networks; and external coherence with other policies. To do this we collected evidence via a range of participatory methods. These included desk research on RDPs and other relevant documentation, a series of key informant interviews and an online survey of relevant actors across the EU, to broaden the evidence base on certain issues (especially the work of the EIP network). Most importantly, we conducted a series of in-depth case studies covering eleven Member States and 20 RDPs.

The evaluation study has also had to deal with several limitations. The fact that the evaluation was commissioned at a time when most RDPs were only just beginning to become operational meant that only a first series of OGs had been set up by the time the evaluation team conducted, and that final project results were not yet available. We therefore had to base the evaluation primarily on the approved RDPs, on underlying national legislation, on calls that had been (and, in some cases, still are to be) launched and on the likely effectiveness and efficiency of the activities that are expected to follow.

The evaluation thus relied to a significant extent on how the EIP has been programmed in the RDPs and on what key stakeholders expect and / or see happening. Nonetheless, this approach shows how the Member States and regions have understood the EIP concept of interactive innovation, and allowed us to assess the enabling environment for OGs they have been building.

Key conclusions

The evidence collected and the analysis of the early implementation of the EIP have clearly shown that its premise on the development and dissemination of innovative farming practices which address both productivity and sustainability is seen as valid and important. Although the EIP approach was voluntary for Member States and regions in Rural Development legislation, its uptake has been impressive, in particular for a newly introduced measure. The **EIP is being implemented in 26 Member States, in 96 out of a possible 111 RDPs**, which testifies to the perceived need for its distinctive approach to innovation.

The EIP approach seeks to move to an innovation ecosystem in which farmers (alongside other essential actors) are active participants in the co-creation of innovative solutions, rather than passive recipients of theoretical or difficult-to-apply knowledge. It leads to a focus on projects which facilitate **co-ownership of innovative solutions** and / or in which **farmers take a leading or the lead role in a project**. The bottom-up approach should guarantee that needs of farmers and forest managers are tackled and that emerging innovative opportunities may find funding that previously was unavailable. While there are many initiatives focused on innovation at European and Member State / regional levels, the evaluation has found that the **EIP's bottom-up and farmer-led approach is truly distinctive and highly appreciated by stakeholders**.

The EIP's **intervention logic** shows how funding for the establishment and operation of, and support for, OGs (at Member State / regional level) and networking activities (at European level) should lead, in the first instance, to innovative solutions to the practical challenges

facing farmers and foresters, and the dissemination of these solutions among relevant stakeholders so they can be implemented in practice and stimulate follow-up action. Later on, more systemic results are expected in part through the realisation of planned complementarities with the Horizon 2020 programme (H2020), the interconnection of OGs across borders and with other initiatives seeking to promote innovation in the agriculture and forestry sectors.

The evaluation approach considered the early stage of implementation (OGs have only been selected in seven of the 20 regions we visited for in-depth case studies) and therefore did not seek to assess the effects of the EIP beyond output level. Instead, we examined the theory underpinning the EIP (as depicted in the intervention logic) based on the evidence available so far, and found that it **broadly holds true**.

The evidence leads us to several **broader conclusions**. First, the EIP addresses needs that have been described not only in RDP documentation but by a wide array of stakeholders. That the vast majority of RDPs have programmed for the EIP and devoted substantial resources to it is unusual for a new measure, and demonstrates that the Member States and regions are willing to prioritise and address these needs. Individual OGs, while highly diverse, are for the most part dealing with relevant issues from a practical perspective, and bringing together the desired innovation actors. Assuming that a substantial proportion of the envisaged 3,205 OGs are formed, it is highly likely that they will lead to a **large number of innovative solutions** to practical agricultural and forestry problems.

Theme 1: internal coherence and relevance for the EIP-related elements in the RDPs

The evaluation found that in the way it has been designed and implemented so far, the **EIP is both internally coherent and relevant** to the needs of farmers and forest managers. More specifically, the EIP concept clearly fits the needs assessments and strategic priorities of the RDPs, which place a major focus on innovation in the agriculture and forestry sectors.

Innovation actors, most importantly farmers and forest managers, emphasised a lacking vehicle for projects linking research and practice, which was consistent across countries / regions despite big differences in the agricultural context and innovation infrastructure. **The flexibility of the EIP allows it to tackle this and to be shaped to widely disparate circumstances**. While there were some concerns and uncertainties, these related to the early stage of implementation.

Theme 2: effectiveness and efficiency of the EIP implementation through RDPs

The evaluation has found that EIP funding will be effective at attracting relevant applicants. Agricultural businesses are more likely to become involved in the innovation process under the EIP as compared with other funding streams for innovation in the agricultural sector. Even if there are doubts as to whether OGs are likely to be fully *farmer-led*, the selection criteria put in place by most RDPs should be enough to ensure **the interests of primary producers will be at the heart of project plans**. Our analysis is that emphasis should be given to **not watering down EIP's distinctive and practical 'bottom-up' approach**.

The evaluation observed a variety of approaches towards the support provided to applicants, although **it is too early to judge how effective support is likely to be**. In some RDPs, the Managing Authority will play an active role and provide direct support to prospective OGs, while in others technical and administrative support would be provided through other bodies. The evaluation found evidence that particular choices made by some RDPs in their implementation of EIP are likely to add to the administrative burden faced by applicants. **Although innovation actors consider the application process** as organised by Member States and regions to be **lengthy**, it has not prevented them from applying. The possibility to provide **lump-sum support for preparation of OG project plans coupled with a**

relatively simple application seems to encourage innovation actors to work together to take the necessary steps to invest time in putting together an eligible project proposal.

However, the evaluation did find some evidence that smaller businesses, including some primary producers, may be deterred from applying for funding as a result of **the lack of advance funding and the administrative burden associated with EIP**.

Theme 3: EU added value of the EIP network, effectiveness and efficiency of the EU level and national networks

The **pan-European approach** of EIP and the **ability to share lessons and form partnerships across countries and regions** are seen as **distinctive and potentially powerful aspects** of the initiative. The EIP network and the linking of OGs to EU multi-actor projects and thematic networks under Horizon 2020 are seen as having a critical role in this, with the potential to provide substantial extra EU added value beyond the mere push of member States towards more innovation under RDPs. **Those engaging with the EIP and the EIP network so far have had positive experiences.**

The evaluation also found that, **where the EIP networks and national / regional Rural Networks have been active** at regional/national level, they have **promoted awareness and uptake of the EIP**. They will also be involved in **publicising and disseminating the results** of OGs, increasing the chances of success. However, a **lack of clear EIP-related activity plans** raises concerns about how many NRNs / RRNs will do this in practical terms. Also, efforts for dissemination and translation related to OGs projects and materials produced by EIP network activities (Focus Groups, workshops, seminars) are still at a too low level.

Similarly, at EU level the EIP network is **facilitating the exchange of expertise and good practices** and **involving multipliers** who will be crucial for the later application and / or follow-up of OG results.

Theme 4: External coherence of the EIP with other policies

The evaluation found that there is a **solid basis for external coherence** between the EIP and other policies. Synergies with Horizon 2020, and potential synergies with environmental and regional policies, are manifest in the legal and programming documents reviewed and in the priorities established by Managing Authorities in the Member States and regions. However, at this stage there is a **widespread lack of awareness of the joint opportunities and synergies** between the EIP and related EU funding and initiatives. This is in part related to the fact that stakeholders are currently prioritising the set-up and opportunities offered by rural development funding at local level at this early stage of development of the initiative.

The EIP's **higher-level objectives** entail more systemic changes related to knowledge flows depending the funding of a critical mass of successful projects, with the results widely disseminated and applied as expected. The improvement of interconnections in the national and regional Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) thanks to EIP networking will play a distinctive role for those knowledge flows. Envisaged complementarities with Horizon 2020, of which several practical examples already exist, as well as other initiatives, will also be important.

The above conclusions make the case that the **EIP has got off to a good start**. However, the EIP does signify a major change in how agricultural innovation and knowledge management is organised both at EU level and in most Member States. Unsurprisingly, this raises some **challenges which need to be addressed** to optimise its delivery and future success.

Although several thousand farms will participate in OGs, this is only a small proportion of all farms in the EU. Therefore, the dissemination of OG results and their wider application on farms that are not partners in an OG is vital. OGs will not be able to accomplish this task on their own, but at the same time the AKIS are often fragmented and not currently equipped to disseminate the large volume of additional project outputs which EIP OGs as well as and H2020 multi-actor projects will generate. In many of the Member States and regions, **structures to enable connections and the dissemination of innovation** between the regional, national and EU levels are **not adequately developed**.

The EIP aspires to involve farmers and forest managers in OGs as full partners or as project leaders, although in a few countries this is not being made a requirement for OGs. For many farmers or forest managers, it will be the first time that they apply for competitive RDP funding. If the perceptions of the **application process** or of the **cash flow implications (due to the lack of advanced payments)** of accessing RDP funding for this type of project is too onerous, the fear is that many farmers with good ideas for projects may choose not to take them forward.

Some of these issues could be overcome by **ensuring that innovation brokers support** farmers and forest managers who take the lead in OG projects with their applications, but in some Member States and regions this type of role is not currently foreseen. Moreover, feedback from stakeholders has also identified **concerns and uncertainties about the perceived administrative burden**, which could restrict the willingness or capacity of some farmers and forest managers to take the lead in OG projects.

The **cross-border element** also merits brief discussion. Given that the EIP is mainly funded through RDPs, it is primarily aimed at addressing Member State / regional needs. However, it is also intended to support the exchange of innovative practice between farms in different regions and countries, which can enhance the measure's benefits and provide substantial additional EU added value. This is seen as a worthy objective in the majority of Member States and regions where we conducted fieldwork. However, this aspect of the EIP has not been fully grasped in some countries and regions where we conducted case studies. This may impact on the overall effectiveness of the EIP, particularly regarding the systemic changes desirable in the medium-to-long term.

Finally, the EIP is being introduced into a research, development, innovation and entrepreneurial landscape in agriculture which is already complex, multi-faceted and operating on multiple levels. For the EIP to fully realise its potential, it needs to **fit well within the wider innovation ecosystem**. Practical connections are already being made with the H2020 in this regard. More widely, in most Member States and regions the EIP is being launched with still limited concrete links to other national and regional agricultural funding programmes. This is to be expected at this early stage, when it is important to launch the measure and ensure that it achieves its core outputs, but later on it will be important to take full advantage of potential synergies and complementarities.

Recommendations

While the conclusions presented above are broadly positive, the evidence also pointed to **ways in which the effectiveness of EIP could be improved**. The recommendations fall into four key areas for the short-to-medium term and one supplementary longer term issue. All of these include components that should be dealt with at EU level as well as aspects requiring action by the Member States / regions. In the short-to-medium-term the focus for development of the EIP should be on:

1. **Improving multiplication to maximise effectiveness, follow-up action and synergies:** at national or regional levels, increasing input from practice, dissemination and intensifying networking activities and structures for the messages and learning

emerging from Operational Groups, Thematic Networks, Multi-Actor projects and Focus Groups, so that this learning reaches as many farmers, forest managers, advisors, businesses, researchers and other relevant stakeholders as possible. Possible ways to do this include:

- **Improving the EIP website (EU level):** investing in scaling up the EIP website as the volume of information available via EIP increases will be essential.
 - **Including multipliers in OGs (RDP level):** Managing Authorities should incentivise all OGs to include multipliers who could help with their broad practical knowledge and experience and at the same time spread the word on the work being done to speed up innovation, thanks to their connections to other farmers, foresters and other stakeholders.
 - **Building the mechanisms for multipliers to play a dissemination role (EU and RDP levels):** there is a need for mechanisms to ensure that farm advisory services (public and private), educators, consultants, co-operatives, agri-businesses and others can help promote dissemination of final results, both when a project concludes and afterwards.
 - **Improve linkages between OGs and Thematic Networks (EU level):** as more OGs are created, the role of EU level H2020 Thematic Networks (TNs) in facilitating effective exchange between OGs working on similar topics and promoting the findings from OGs to additional Member States should be reinforced.
 - **Improve linkages between OGs (RDP level):** consideration should also be given to whether the RDP could usefully incentivise, promote and support mechanisms similar to TNs (as in H2020) and EIP FGs at RDP level in countries which have more than one OG focused on similar innovations.
 - **Ensuring translation of practice abstracts (EU and RDP levels):** Clarity is needed about how translation of practice abstracts and EIP network material into national/regional languages will be facilitated. This could be supported by a general obligation in the RD regulation to translate all practice abstracts from OGs into English and further organised through the management (and the related funding) of translation tasks within the national / regional AKIS.
2. **Simplifying and improving administrative systems and rules:** at national or regional level, ease implementation of the EIP by reducing the administrative burden both for applicants and administrators, and to provide appropriate support and facilitation for actors at all stages of the OG lifecycle. Making the measure easy to engage with will allow farmers, foresters, SMEs and industry actors to use the EIP to focus on driving innovation and building new networks. This should also include revisions to EU rules to make it easier for OGs to involve these actors. Possible ways to do this include:
- **Application process (RDP level):** this needs to ensure that applicants can focus on developing an effective project as quickly and simply as possible. Also, smart application forms should include a practice abstract to provide information on the selected OGs from the start of their work.
 - **Third party brokering and facilitation (RDP level):** many farmers lack the skills and knowledge to lead an EIP project or will have concerns about the administrative burden of developing or leading a project, meaning that support would improve participation as well as application and project quality.
 - **Advance payments (EU level):** While for a capital investment project in RDPs, a bank will normally help farmers to cover any immediate shortfall in funding until

the grant is reimbursed, normally through an overdraft, this is not normally the case for innovation projects, creating cash flow concerns and risks for individual farmers. The rules for RDPs should therefore be changed to allow for advance payments, similar to other RDP measures and to research projects.

3. **Promoting the understanding of the EIP's EU added value.** Possible ways to do this include:
 - **Improving clarity about the distinctive features and EU added value** of the EIP at all levels, so that stakeholders, who are very enthusiastic about the EIP so far, can clearly articulate the case for prioritising it in the medium to long term. Speeding up bottom-up innovation development and dissemination within the Member States and regions, as well as facilitating exchange of innovative practice between farms in different regions and countries, will support the Innovation Union and increased economic success.
 - **Dissemination across Member States (EU level):** building on the role of TNs or developing additional ways to support effective dissemination of project results across borders will help to clarify the extra added value of the EIP network to stakeholders.
 - **Multi region/state OGs (EU level):** ensuring that legislation and administrative systems not only allow but **incentivise OGs to operate across the borders of more than one RDP** would bring additional clear EU added value.

4. **Building existing national and regional agricultural knowledge and innovation structures into an EU wide AKIS structure:** improving the integration of the EIP within national/regional AKIS, supported by better coordination of networking structures at EU level. Build "Farm Innovation Systems", systematically linked into an EU wide AKIS, and support innovation-focused farmer-to-farmer (or groups of farmers) exchange programmes. Possible ways to do this include:
 - **Build coherent national or regional AKIS(RDP level):** the EIP creates an opportunity for more work on developing sound and coherent national and regional AKIS **that profit from and link to the (EU-level) EIP network and EU-wide AKIS.**
 - **Improve integration of existing advisory and networking structures (EU level):** the EIP is instrumental to support an EU wide AKIS by improving knowledge flows in the fragmented national and regional agricultural knowledge and innovation systems (AKISs). It would be key to also build an **integrated EU wide AKIS** at EU level **which interlinks these.**
 - **Links to Knowledge Exchange (RDP level):** the EAFRD Regulation already includes measures which support the acquisition of skills and knowledge exchange. There is a clear need to **better use knowledge exchange measures to facilitate the uptake of innovation.** For instance, farm exchanges are currently possible under Article 14 EAFRD, but seldom used, and have no focus on innovation. Consideration should be given to incentivising **innovation-focused farmer-to-farmer exchange programmes** between Member States / regions. By connecting them to EIP activities they would better serve the purpose of fuelling/speeding up innovation.

The final, longer term recommendation is:

5. **Links to other funding:** as the EIP grows and the projects it supports conclude, there is a need to consider how the groups of actors, who in many cases will have been brought together for the first time by the EIP, can continue to work together to facilitate interactive innovation. Links to and awareness of potential 'follow up' funding will help OGs to develop their work further and / or to come up with new ideas for further collaboration. It is important for the desired results of the EIP on the longer term and making the more systemic changes described in Article 55 of the EAFRD Regulation. Possible ways to do this include:
 - **Demonstrating common needs and links to innovation support under H2020 (EU level):** with the launch of more OGs across the different countries and regions in Europe, overlapping and common needs from practice which are tackled through several OGs will become more visible. The H2020 funding for multi-actor projects linked to the EIP is therefore key. Addressing such problems at EU-wide scale will help reduce costs and duplication. Opportunities for linking with H2020 initiatives should be made more visible through the EU-level EIP networking activities.
 - **Links to other elements and funding mechanisms in the CAP and RDP (RDP level):** links to both Pillar 1 and 2 are implicit in the objectives of the EIP, but where these links are made in RDPs they have demonstrated the possibility of the EIP supporting the delivery of other aspects of the CAP (for instance, OGs working on Ecological Focus Area practices or preparing for future agri-environmental measures).
 - **Links to other EU funding opportunities (EU level)** European Structural and Investment Funds, Inter-regional Programmes (Interreg), Life+ programmes and some parts of Horizon 2020 (Societal Challenge 5, EIT KICs) all have potential links to the EIP which should be further explored and communicated about over time.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report comprises an evaluation study of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP). The study was conducted for the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) of the European Commission (EC) by Coffey International Development (Coffey) in partnership with AND International, Edater, SQW and SPEED.

The report's structure is as follows:

- **Section 1** provides an introduction to the evaluation study, its objectives and scope, the set of questions we sought to answer and the methodology applied
- **Section 2** presents the background to the EIP and the state of play of its implementation
- **Section 3** consists of the answers to the evaluation questions
- **Section 4** presents overall conclusions and recommendations
- In addition **two annexes** present tables and data to support the findings and provide summaries of the in-depth case studies conducted for the evaluation.

The sub-sections below summarise the purpose and scope of the evaluation study.

1.1. Purpose of the evaluation study

The tender specifications state the **objective** of the evaluation study, which is to examine the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value of the two main aspects of the EIP, namely:

- The EIP as implemented by Member States and regions in particular through the RDPs; and
- The support for the EIP provided by the EIP network.

The **overall purpose** of the evaluation study is then to provide elements to support EIP's implementation and inform possible mid-term adjustments. Given this, it is clear that the exercise is primarily *formative*, with a view to identifying lessons learned so as to improve policy and implementation during the second half of the funding period. *Summative* aspects on results and impacts achieved are addressed to the extent possible, but not as the primary focus of the evaluation study.

The stated objective and purpose were served through an evaluation study structured according to **three steps**, namely (1) descriptive part, (2) typology, and (3) answers to evaluation questions. These three parts are sequential, but also interrelated, in that each of the steps draws on information and analysis from the others. This report represents the culmination of all three steps.

It is particularly important for this evaluation study to **feed into the policy and planning cycle**. The evaluation study is the first comprehensive study of the EIP, at a time when changes to the policy are still possible within the funding period. It thus provides an opportunity to examine the initiative in context and build an evidence base that can be used to improve the situation. On the one hand, this means the evaluation study focuses on what works (and what does not work), with a view to the Commission's room for manoeuvre for instituting future changes. On the other hand, it was important to compile evidence for use in evaluations later in the programming cycle.

1.2. Scope of the evaluation

The scope of the evaluation study is delineated according to specific instruments, time period, geographical coverage and impacts that were analysed. With regard to geographical scope, it our approach focused on eleven Member States (and 20 RDPs), though some aspects of the research covered the entire EU. For the examination of impacts, the evaluation focuses on what amounts essentially to an *ex ante evaluation* of the EIP implementation through RDPs, coupled with an *interim evaluation* of the EIP network. The table below provides an overview of the four components of the scope, along with their practical application to the evaluation.

Table 1: Overview of the scope of the evaluation study

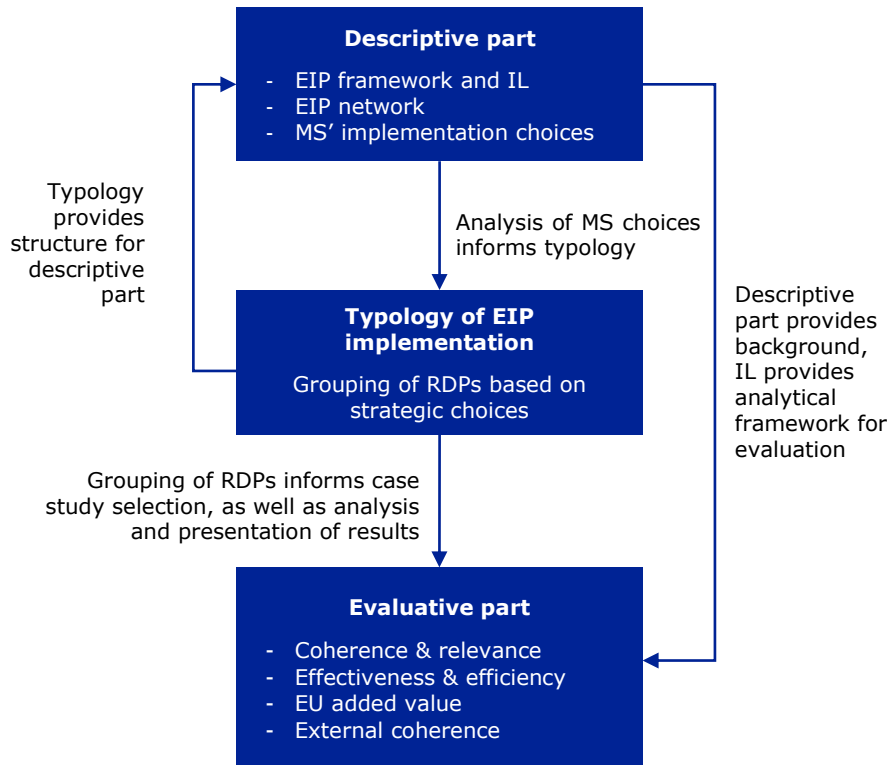
Element of scope	Application to the evaluation study
Instruments covered	<p>All RDPs and NRNPs governed by Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 and their respective delegated and implementing acts, with particular attention to arrangements for supporting the establishment and operation of EIP Operational Groups, implementation of related support measures and arrangements for ensuring links with the EIP network</p> <p>Role of the EIP network in supporting the aims of the EIP</p> <p>Relevant provisions of other policies related to innovation, such as European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds, common provisions for ESI Funds, the Partnership Agreements, Europe 2020 Strategy, Horizon 2020, the first pillar of the CAP and any other policies identified during the course of the evaluation study</p> <p>Relevant guidance documents and guidance fiches for the Member States on programming and implementing innovation and EIP in RDPs</p>
Examination period	The main focus is on the 2014-2020 programming period, with reference to the 2007-2013 period as relevant
Geographical coverage	The typology covers all Member States, while detailed case studies examine 20 RDPs across 10 Member States. The case study selection includes a range of countries which not only represent different approaches to agricultural knowledge and innovation systems, but which also cover the breadth of major agri-food systems across Europe from the Mediterranean, to North West Europe, Scandinavia, Northern centre to the Accession States.
Impacts analysed	Relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and EU added value for the EIP are all considered, with an <i>ex ante</i> focus on intentions and potential contributions; observable results attained at this stage, particularly regarding the EIP network, are also assessed.

1.3. Methodology

The rationale and objectives of this evaluation study (see section above) were primarily *formative*, i.e. to describe, analyse and assess the implementation of the EIP (in particular through Operational Groups set up under RDPs, and through the EIP network). The **purpose** is to identify strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and thereby generate evidence to inform a possible review / adjustment of the policy. While the study also included a *summative* dimension (i.e. to report on results and impacts), this is not its main focus, mainly because of the issue of timing (see sub-section 3.1 on limitations).

The figure below provides a schematic overview of the three steps of the evaluation study and the way that they relate to each other in a mostly, but not completely, sequential fashion. In the ensuing sub-sections, we discuss each of the main elements in turn, and provide a summary of the approach and main methods we employed.

Figure 1: The three 'steps' of the evaluation study and the logical relationship between them



Evaluating the implementation of the EIP across the EU required consideration of a number of challenges linked to the design and implementation of the measure, including:

- **Diverse agricultural situations across the EU**, including variable interests of farmers (full-time versus part-time dedication, different commercial pressures in sub-sectors etc.) and differences in the scale of the farming sector, among other factors.
- **Divergent agricultural policies across Member States**, with marked differences regarding the relative importance of economic, social and environmental objectives. For example, agricultural policy in the Netherlands is very much focused on competitiveness and international trade, whereas other Member States prioritise environmental or social factors. The focus on organic food also varies markedly, being a minor sector in the UK and representing a very large segment in Germany.
- **Varying levels of public support for AKIS**, as well as differences in their orientation and focus. Some countries have focused on environmental sustainability (e.g. very strong focus in the UK until recently), while others have prioritised factors of production (e.g. soil science has been a priority sustained in Central and Eastern European countries such as Hungary, which other Member States began to address only recently).

1.3.1. Descriptive part and typology

The first, descriptive part of the study covered three main elements:

1. an overview of the EIP framework, including an intervention logic to clarify the relationships and causal linkages between the various inputs and activities and the desired results at various levels;
2. a description of the EIP network and its activities aimed at linking partners, sharing and disseminating knowledge and information, identifying themes and challenges, and inspiring relevant stakeholders to take action to address these; and
3. a systematic review of if and how the different national and regional RDPs intend to implement the EIP by setting up Operational Groups, the choices made and the reasons behind them.

We undertook a process of collecting, reviewing and analysing information to develop the descriptive part by a combination of **desk-based research and interviews with key informants**. Section 2 consists of a descriptive chapter that sets out the background to the EIPA and the state of play of its implementation.

Most but not all Member States and (where applicable) regions have decided to make use of the opportunity to set up EIP Operational Groups as part of their respective RDPs. Among those that have, **significant differences** exist in terms of aspects such as the number of planned groups and earmarked financial resources; the prioritised sectors and themes; the roles of public and private actors, provisions for advisory and support services and funding; etc. Given this variety, it was important to identify the most significant conceptual and practical differences, and the drivers behind them.

Understanding the two or three key factors that matter *most* when it comes to the strategic choices made by Member States and regions informed our approach to the **development of a typology**, which was used to classify RDPs into clearly distinct groups (our methodology for and application of the typology is presented in section 2 of this report). This classification facilitated the various analytical tasks relating to all three steps of the evaluation. For the descriptive part, it provided a structure that allowed us to discuss and summarise key features and choices regarding the implementation of the EIP throughout the EU in a coherent and concise way. In this sense, we see a **feedback loop between the descriptive work and the typology**: the former informed the latter, as well as vice versa. In addition, the typology also informed the sample selection for the evaluative part (which investigated RDPs that cover the whole range of 'types') as well as providing a framework to help categorise and interpret the results.

1.3.2. Evaluative part

As noted previously, the evaluation focused on the implementation of the EIP through the RDPs, and on the EIP network. Due to the early stage of the implementation, the emphasis was placed on systematically reviewing and collecting the views of relevant actors and stakeholders on the plans for EIP implementation that have been drawn up, and on the first (in many cases tentative) steps to put them into practice. The main challenge therefore lay in **anticipating / estimating effectiveness, efficiency, EU added value** etc. as robustly as possible, at a time when results and impacts had hardly begun to materialise in practice.

To tackle this challenge, the evaluation study placed a special focus on understanding the main factors that determine the **relevance of EIP related initiatives and instruments**, as well as the **preconditions that need to be in place** in order for them to meet their objectives, among others. This required a significant amount of scoping work in the initial

phase of the project, drawing on existing literature as well as the views of experts, policy makers and stakeholders, so as to be able to define a series of key issues (or hypotheses) that are expected to affect the success of implementation. It was also important to consider if and how these might differ between different 'types' (see above) of countries / regions / RDPs.

1.3.3. Main methods employed

The evaluation relied on a mix of different tools to collect and analyse data.

- **Document review:** This included an in-depth analysis of all 118 RDPs in addition to a review of other relevant documentation about the EU and Member State components of the EIP. Of particular note, RDP analysis templates were completed for 32 regional and national level RDPs covering all 28 Member States. In addition, full templates were also filled out for the 20 RDPs that were examined in depth as part of the case studies (discussed below). These templates present an overview of rural development in the Member State / region, including rural development priorities, and profile innovation and R&D in the agricultural sector. Where the RDP programmes for the EIP, detail is provided on how the EIP works in practice in the Member State / region including a description of the RDP measures selected and the approach to selecting and supporting Operational Groups. While RDP programming documents provided the main source of evidence for completing these templates, any gaps were filled through ad hoc interviews and email exchanges with Managing Authorities.
- **Key informant interviews:** Interviews with all available Managing Authorities were used to gather information on RDPs as described above. In addition, we carried out interviews with relevant EU officials (DG AGRI and DG REGIO), the EIP Service Point and EU-level interest groups representing the interests of farmers and landowners. Detailed topic guides were followed during the interviews, which differed according to the purpose of the interview (e.g. familiarisation, in-depth exploration of particular issues related to the evaluation themes) and the type of interviewee.
- **Online survey:** An online survey of relevant actors across the EU was designed to broaden the evidence base on certain issues (especially the work of the EIP network). The purpose of the survey was mainly to collect views on the relevance and performance of the EIP network. But it was also used to examine the relevance and level of awareness of EIP overall and of NRNs. The survey complemented the other data collection tools with regard to all evaluation themes, by allowing us to gather relevant information from a broader set of rural stakeholders than would be possible through the case studies and in-depth interviews alone. The survey was launched in May 2016 in six languages and targeted key stakeholders across the EU, including farmers, forest managers, advisors, researchers / scientists, businesses in the food chain, government authorities and NGOs. The survey was online for seven weeks. It was mainly promoted via a link to the questionnaire on the EIP website and through invitations sent (with the link) to MAs and NRNs in the Member States. DG AGRI also used its Twitter account to promote the survey. In total, 451 responses were collected and analysed.
- **Case study fieldwork:** Case study fieldwork was conducted during April and May 2016 and involved about 160 interviews across 20 RDPs within 11 Member States¹.

¹ The sample consisted of Flanders, Belgium; Bulgaria; Croatia; Brittany, Midi-Pyrénées and Rhône-Alpes in France; Berlin-Brandenburg and Rhineland Palatinate in Germany; Greece; Puglia, Emilia-Romagna and Veneto in Italy; Poland; the Basque Country, Catalonia and Andalusia in Spain; Sweden; and England, Scotland and Wales in the UK.

This began with interviews in Sweden as part of a pilot case study, after which we refined the case study report template and corresponding interview guides. The sample included both national and regional programmes and drew on the typology developed previously to include examples of each relevant group. As part of the case studies, we undertook a systematic review of the main programming documents (expanding on the work already done for the descriptive part), and interviewed representatives of Managing Authorities, National and Regional Network Support Units, Operational Groups that have been or are in the process of being set up, and other key actors. The case studies were each based on an analysis of relevant documentation (particularly RDPs), about eight qualitative interviews per RDP and (as applicable) the findings of other research conducted for the evaluation. The summaries provided at Annex B to this report present the headline findings and conclusions that can be drawn from each case study.

1.4. Evaluation study questions

The evaluation sought to answer five questions spread across four themes. Our interpretation of these questions is summarised in the table below. For a more detailed discussion of the evaluation questions, including judgement criteria and indicators, and the answers, see section 4 of this report).

Table 2: Overview of evaluation questions

Evaluation theme	Evaluation question	Key considerations
Theme 1: Internal coherence and relevance	EQ1: To what extent are the EIP-related elements included in the RDPs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coherent with the needs assessment and strategic priorities of the programme area? - Relevant with regard to the needs of the farmers and forest managers in the programme area? - Coherent with related initiatives and elements of the first Pillar of the CAP? 	Successful interventions need to be relevant to both the needs and problems of prospective beneficiaries and coherent / complementary with other initiatives. This means figuring out whether and to what extent the EIP is consistent with the goals of given RDPs and the rest of the CAP, in addition to the needs of farmers and forest managers, researchers and businesses.
Theme 2: Effectiveness and efficiency	EQ 2: To what extent are the implementation choices made in the RDPs by the MSs intended to contribute to reaching the general objective of enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective or providing the necessary preconditions for enabling effectiveness? - Efficient in terms of limiting the administrative burden? 	The timing of the exercise means the evaluation study needed to gauge the effectiveness of EIP implementation through RDPs mainly ex ante, by estimating / anticipating likely effects, while identifying contributions to productivity and sustainability that are already beginning to take place. The assessment of efficiency focuses on administrative burden, as the main cost factor that is evident at this stage.
Theme 3: EU added value of the EIP network, effectiveness and efficiency of the EU level and	EQ 3: To what extent are the structures and work programme of the EU level EIP network in terms of supporting the aims of the EIP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adequate to achieve the aims set out in Article 53(2) of 	Since a key network function is to capture and disseminate knowledge from the Operational Groups, we explored challenges linked to this, particularly regarding intellectual property. Feedback on the Focus Groups and

Evaluation theme	Evaluation question	Key considerations
national networks	<p>Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Efficient and providing EU added value? <p>EQ 4: To what extent is the National Rural Networks' design and operation with regard to innovation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adequate for achieving the aim set out in point (d) of Article 54(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013? - Efficient? 	<p>other activities, in addition to the set-up and structure of the network and links with national networks, is also assessed.</p>
Theme 4: External coherence with other policies	<p>EQ 5: To what extent is the EIP complementary and coherent with the Europe 2020 strategy and with other policies, notably with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Horizon 2020? - Environmental policy? - Regional policy? 	<p>With a particular focus on coherence with Europe 2020 and relevant flagship initiatives (i.e. Innovation Union), as well as Horizon 2020, it is important to go beyond general consistency to explore genuine interactions, complementarities and cross-fertilisation.</p>

2. BACKGROUND TO THE EIP AND IMPLEMENTATION STATE OF PLAY

This chapter describes the European Innovation Partnership for agricultural productivity and sustainability (EIP). The chapter starts with an outline of the policy context (section 2.1), followed by an overview of the EIP and its intervention logic (section 2.2), and a description of the relation of the EIP to the CAP, the Horizon 2020 programme and other policies (section 2.3). The description of the EIP implementation at EU level, including the EIP network, its management and implementation, is developed in section 2.4. This is followed by a detailed analysis of the EIP implementation at national and regional level in section 2.5.

2.1. General context

A recent European Commission Communication pointed out several factors that taken together mean the European agricultural sector will need to become more productive while managing natural resources sustainably and preserving the environment.² It goes on to say that the necessary gains will only be possible through 'major research and innovation efforts at all levels' and efforts to close the widely-acknowledged 'gap between the provision of research results and the application of innovative approaches to farming practice'.³

Making this happen in practice is far from simple, in part due to shifting dynamics and roles between the public and private sectors. This was noted in 2009, in a report by the European Commission Standing Committee on Agricultural Research,⁴ which identified several problems inherent in the delivery of Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS), notably:

- Trends towards privatisation of AKIS coupled with a progressive dis-investment by public authorities, which among other things reduces the incentives for relevant stakeholders to collaborate
- The lack of organisation of AKIS technology infrastructures at European level to provide adequate capacity (infrastructures and expertise) to integrate agricultural, health, food, climate change and environmental knowledge, science and technologies.

Viewed alongside the challenges facing other parts of the economy, the importance of coherent innovation policy and the public sector's role in fostering innovation has increasingly come into focus.⁵ For these reasons, agriculture is one of the five key areas in which European Innovation Partnerships have been launched under the EU's Innovation Union Flagship Initiative.⁶

European Innovation Partnerships represent a new approach to EU research and innovation. As explained in the Communication on Innovation Union, the Partnerships are challenge-driven, act across the whole research and innovation chain and aim to streamline, simplify, better coordinate and complement existing instruments and initiatives, making it easier for partners to co-operate and achieve better and faster results.⁷ European Innovation Partnerships have been established in five areas, namely Active and Health Ageing, Smart Cities and Communities, Water, Raw Materials and

² Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the European Innovation Partnership 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability', COM (2012) 79 final, 2012.

³ Ibid.

⁴ DG RTD, 2nd SCAR Foresight Exercise, New Challenges for Agricultural Research: climate change, food security, rural development and agricultural systems, 2009, URL: https://ec.europa.eu/research/scar/pdf/scar_2nd-foresight_2009.pdf.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The Innovation Union Flagship Initiative is the integrated, strategic approach to fostering innovation within Europe 2020, the EU's ten-year growth strategy. The Innovation Union aims to make innovation an overarching policy objective which is anchored at the highest political level and mainstreamed into a wide range of relevant policies and interventions, with a high degree of long-term planning and progress monitoring, and a better alignment of policies at the different levels. See the Innovation Union website for more information on it and its 34 concrete commitments for action, URL: http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm.

⁷ For a complete explanation of the European Innovation Partnership concept, see the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative: Innovation Union, COM(2010) 546 final.

Agricultural Sustainability and Productivity.⁸ The last of these is the subject of the present evaluation study and is described in detail in the ensuing sections.

2.2. Overview of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Sustainability and Productivity and its intervention logic

This section provides an overview of the concept and key features behind the EIP, followed by a summary of its legal base. We then present the EIP's intervention logic, which provides a basis for the 'theory' of the EIP that the current evaluation study set out to assess in practice.

2.2.1. Concept

The European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Sustainability and Productivity (EIP) was launched by the European Commission in 2012⁹ and focuses on the agricultural and forestry sectors. Its overarching aim is to foster competitiveness and sustainability in these sectors, thereby contribute to:

- Ensuring a steady supply of food, feed and biomaterials, and
- The sustainable management of the essential natural resources on which farming and forestry depend by working in harmony with the environment.

To do this, the EIP **brings together innovation actors** (farmers, advisors, researchers, businesses, NGOs, etc.) and helps to build bridges between research and practice. The EIP's activities apply an overarching concept based on the "interactive innovation model" (see description in the text box at right) in order to develop and diffuse solutions / opportunities that can be readily implemented in practice.

The EIP is also about **creating synergies** between existing policies, most notably the EU's 2014-2020 rural development policy and its research and innovation policy (Horizon 2020). The EIP focuses on forming partnerships, using bottom-up approaches and linking actors in innovation projects, most importantly Operational Groups (implemented under Member State / regional Rural Development Programmes (RDPs)) and multi-actor projects (under Horizon 2020). In addition, networking and information-sharing activities take place at EU level through an EIP network.

Interactive innovation goes further than "linear innovation", which stands for a science and research driven approach, where new ideas resulting from research brought into practice through one-way (linear) knowledge transfer, and where change and innovation are expected to be engineered, predictable and would be planned rationally. In "interactive" innovation, building blocks for innovations are expected to come from science, or from practice and intermediaries, including farmers, advisors, NGOs, businesses etc. as actors in a bottom-up process. Interactive innovation includes existing (sometimes tacit) knowledge which is not always purely scientific. It may also generate from a group of actors without necessarily having researchers involved.

The EIP aims at a flexible and open system for the creation of a multiplicity of **Operational Groups**. These are specific innovation projects that look at tackling specific practical issues and opportunities according to the needs of the agricultural and forestry sector. The composition of an Operational Group is tailored to the objectives of the specific project and will vary from project to project – they can be made up of - for instance - farmers, farmers' organisations, advisors, researchers, NGOs, businesses or anyone else who has something to bring to the table in terms of ideas, knowledge and solutions. Linking with farming practice is key.

⁸ An overview of the five European Innovation Partnerships can be found on the Commission's dedicated website, URL: http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm?pg=eip.

⁹ For more background on the EIP, see Communication on the European Innovation Partnership 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability' (COM (2012)79 final).

2.2.2. Legal base

The EIP is mainly implemented through Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 (the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) Regulation), which provides co-funding for innovative projects of "Operational Groups" involving farmers, advisors, researchers, enterprises, and other actors in a targeted way to cooperate in a joint research project.

More specifically:

- **Article 55** introduces the aims of the EIP and stipulates its focus on agricultural and forestry issues, as well as the importance of involving a wide range of actors in pursuit of this focus.
- **Articles 56 and 57** clarify the ways in which the EIP will become operational (via Operational Groups) and lay down the types of actions to be undertaken by operational groups which need to involve farming practice.
- **Article 35 (on co-operation)** explains that support can be given both for the setting-up of EIP operational groups (Article 35(1)(c)), and for the implementation of an operational group's project through the activities listed under Article 35(2) (a) to (k), for instance for the development of new products or practices, or for pilot projects, for supply chain cooperation, for joint environmental project approaches or climate change actions, for cooperation in biomass provision or renewable energy, for forest management and much more.

Other articles of the Regulation are also relevant to the EIP, namely:

- Article 14, knowledge transfer and information actions
- Article 15, advisory services
- Article 17, investments in physical assets
- Article 19, farm and business development
- Article 26, investments in forestry technologies and in processing, in mobilising and in the marketing of forest products
- Article 27, setting-up of producer groups and organisations

In addition, **Article 53** establishes an EIP network facility at EU level which is responsible for collecting and disseminating information, providing a helpdesk function (the EIP Service Point), and animating discussions to promote and support the setting-up of Operational Groups. The EIP-AGRI network is run by the European Commission (DG Agriculture and Rural Development) with the help of the Service Point (SP). The SP team facilitates the networking activities. The EIP network at EU level will link with innovation networks at MS/regional level, which are supported under rural development programmes (EIP networks/NRNs) and provide innovation support (e.g. for partner search and networking).

Article 54 defines the tasks of the NRNs with regard to fostering innovation and the EIP: raising awareness, networking advisors and innovation support services, partner search for OGs, collecting and disseminating good examples.

Furthermore, **EU research and Innovation Policy** (through Horizon 2020) plays a key role in the EIP by providing the knowledge base for innovative actions on the ground and its focus to connect actors beyond Member States' borders. This is particularly important because actions under the RDPs adopted at by Member States and regions to implement the EAFRD Regulation are normally applied within the boundaries of the programming regions, while research policy goes beyond this scale by co-funding innovative actions at the cross-regional, cross-border, or EU-level. **Other policies** might also offer opportunities for cooperation and implementation of the interactive innovation model.

2.2.3. Intervention logic

Before discussing the specifics of the EIP's design and practical implementation, it is important to understand how it should work *in theory*. To this end, figure 2 depicts the EIP's **intervention logic**.¹⁰ The diagram lays out the EIP's main elements, from the pre-existing problem it is meant to address to desired long-term impacts, and shows how they connect to each other in a series of causal relationships.

These obviously **simplify reality**, which is too complex to represent accurately on a single page. Nonetheless, by pinning down the EIP's key features, the intervention logic helps us figure out where to look for evidence of success or lack thereof.

To this end, the diagram also depicts **key assumptions** that must hold in order for the EIP to have its desired effects. Some of these are internal, and relate to such factors as sufficient interest from stakeholders, the quality of the (innovative) solutions that the OGs create and ability to generate and exploit synergies with the Horizon 2020 programme.

Others are **contextual factors** that link it to the surrounding context. These are particularly important given the programme's explicit aims to speed up innovation by streamlining and linking existing policies and instruments through connecting different actors in an interactive innovation model, and through its focus on filling in gaps (both in terms of problems addressed and results) not sufficiently covered by other innovation approaches.

As an aid for reading the intervention logic, the following bullet points give an **overview of the EIP's main features**. Each aspect of the EIP is described in more detail in the ensuing sections on the EIP's relationship with the CAP, Horizon 2020 and other policies (section 2.3), EU-level implementation (section 2.4) and Member State-level implementation (section 2.5).

- **Problem / rationale:** the rationale for the EIP hinges on several assumptions about the existing situation. These stipulate not only that Europe needs to increase innovation in the agricultural and forestry sectors, based on joint efforts between farmers and various other types of actors, but also that an important barrier to innovation is the lack of suitable mechanisms for these actors to collaborate.
- **Inputs:** these consist mainly of funding for the EIP, which has been made available to address this problem from the EAFRD Regulation as per the articles described above. At EU level the funding is mainly for the EIP network. At Member State / regional level, the funding is programmed for in RDPs¹¹ and includes most importantly measure 16 for co-operation, in particular sub-measure 16.1 for the establishment and operation of OGs. Other relevant measures, include measure 1 for knowledge transfer, measure 2 for advisory services, measure 4 for investments in physical assets, measure 6 for farm and business development, measure 8 for investments in forestry, measure 9 for setting up of producer groups, and measure 20 for technical assistance for networking.¹²
- **Activities:** the Member State- and European-level inputs then flow into two sets of activities. On the one hand, Operational Groups and National Rural Networks are implemented at Member State level. On the other hand, the EIP Network, which operates at European level, and which provides a means for the OGs to connect to each other, exchange information and create synergies through a bottom-up approach. The flows between the different activities at national, regional and EU levels are developed in more detail below:

¹⁰ The diagram was prepared based on the tender specifications for this evaluation, relevant EIP documentation, COM (2012) 79 final on the EIP and Regulations (EU) 1305/2013, 1306/2013, 1307/2013 & 1308/2013, as well as a workshop with four DG AGRI officials held shortly after the start of the evaluation.

¹¹ The measure and sub-measure programming codes are set in Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 on the application of rules for the application of the EAFRD Regulation.

¹² Other sources of funding that are relevant to the agricultural and forestry sector include most crucially Horizon 2020, as well as other EU policies and funding opportunities through national and regional policies, and private and third sector sources. These are not depicted as inputs in the IL, but as contextual factors under other innovation initiatives.

- **Member State implementation:** Operational Group projects form the main operation at Member State level for implementing the EIP. An OG is a specific project bringing together farmers, forest managers, researchers, businesses, advisers, NGOs and / or other stakeholders, based in a given Member State or region, tackle together a practical problem/opportunity in order to find innovative solutions.

In each Member State / region, national / regional Rural Networks, innovation brokers and other advisors help actors to set up OGs and disseminate and share relevant information (e.g. through bringing dedicated potential actors together, helping to prepare their OG project plan and spreading information about funding opportunities).

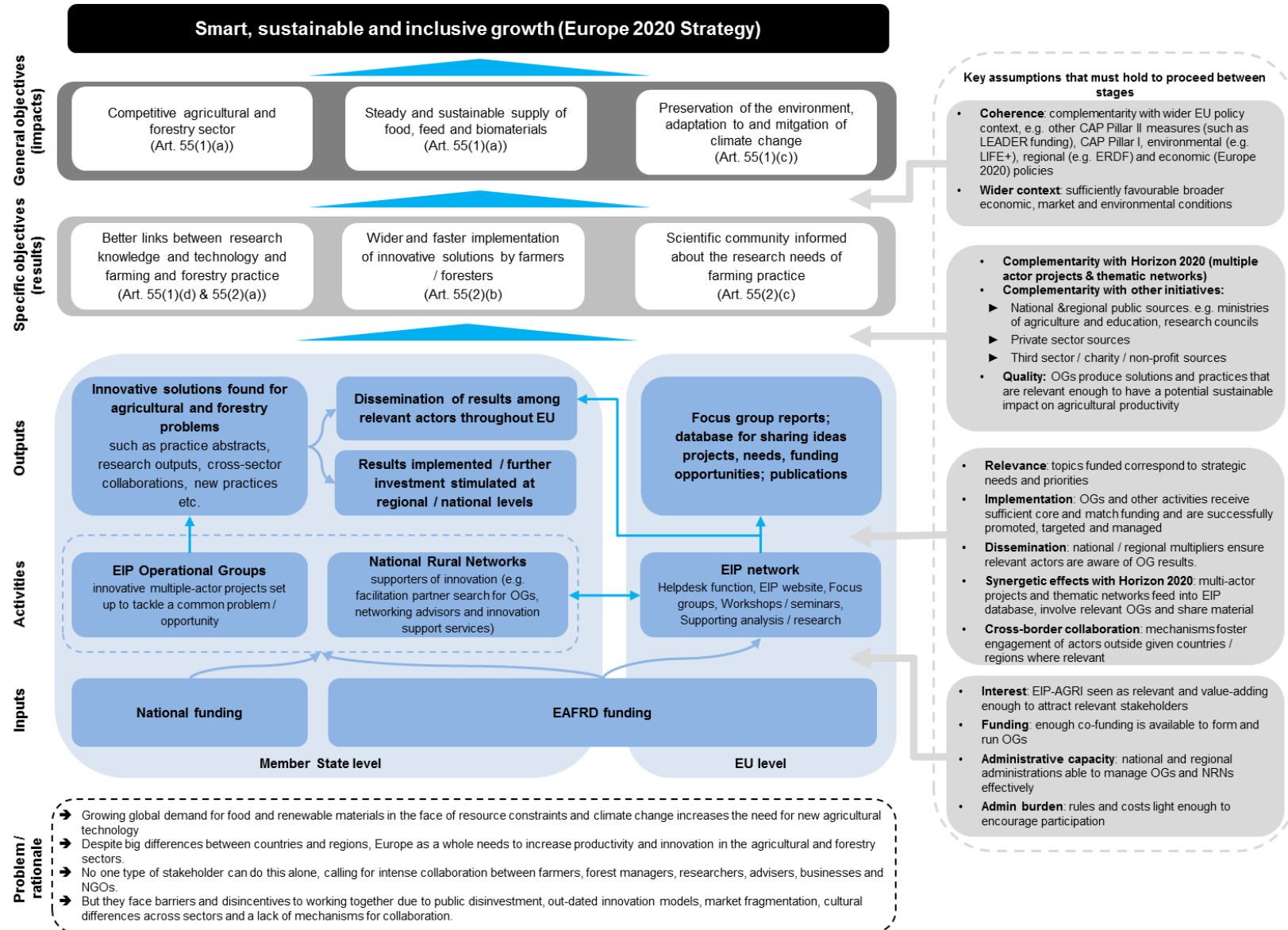
Importantly, the precise features of the Member State component are set at either national or regional level, depending on their detailed objectives, understanding of the EIP concept, the administrative structure and priorities and needs of individual Member States. Accordingly, they differ in substantial ways. With regard to the OGs, such differences relate to e.g. amounts of funding and required match-funding, possibilities for combining measure 16 funding with other measures, priority themes and sectors, selection criteria and procedures, group size and composition and the role of innovation support services and brokering.

- **EU implementation:** this consists mainly of networking activities to facilitate the exchange of expertise and good practices; and to establish a dialogue between farmers and the research community and facilitate the inclusion of all stakeholders in the knowledge exchange process. In practical terms, the functioning of the EIP network¹³ is facilitated by the Service Point, a team of experts that organises networking and other activities to support the EIP. These include a help desk function, EIP website and database, events such as workshops and seminars and supporting analysis and research. Focus Groups are periodically convened to discuss and explore issues that may incentivise the setting up of EIP OG projects.
- **Outputs:** this level depicts the solutions expected from the Operational Groups (in terms of e.g. new practices) and efforts to disseminate OG results and put into practice or encourage further investment in them. Achievements at this stage will depend in part on the extent to which the assumptions bear out. These relate to the applicability of OG topics, successful implementation of OGs and dissemination of OG results among relevant national / regional actors (with the help of key multipliers such as national / regional rural networks). Horizon 2020 thematic networks can both generate ideas to be taken up in OGs and act as an outlet for follow-up action on OG results. Participation by Managing Authorities, national / regional rural networks and other multipliers in EU-level activities can ensure good ideas and practices cascade downward to Member State / regional implementation of the EIP. The EIP network also has an important role to play in linking actors from around the EU with the aim of scaling-up OG results through the networking and dissemination activities.
- **Specific objectives (results):** in stimulating new innovations and bringing relevant actors together, the combined effects of the many individual projects funded through the EIP should contribute to more general improvements in the innovation landscape. The most important expected results include the specific objectives of the EIP defined in Article 55 of the EAFRD Regulation, such as better links between research and farming and forestry practice, the quicker translation into practice of innovative solutions and a scientific community that is informed about the research needs of farming practice. At this level the ability of OGs to inspire and connect to multi-actor projects and thematic networks under the Horizon 2020 programme will also be important.
- **General objectives (impacts):** over the longer term, the desired impacts of the EIP link back to the original problems and higher-level objectives expressed in Article 55 of the EAFRD Regulation. These include especially competitiveness, sustainability in terms of production,

¹³As per Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013

preservation of the environment and adaptation to and mitigation of the effects of climate change. The extent to which this happens will rely on coherence with the wider context in terms of EU and other policies and broader trends.

Figure 2: EIP intervention logic



2.3. Relationship with the CAP, Horizon 2020 and other policies

2.3.1. EIP fit within the CAP

While the CAP has been a cornerstone of European cooperation since 1962, it has constantly evolved to meet the shifting needs of society and the agricultural sector.¹⁴ It undergoes a redesign every seven years, and the **CAP's current iteration represents a significant break** from the past with a view to addressing a number of challenges including: food security, competitiveness, the management of natural resources, climate change and the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, as well as the evolving needs of national agricultural stakeholders. It has also been strongly informed by the need to cohere with the Europe 2020 strategy, including the "Resource Efficient Europe" flagship programme¹⁵.

The **CAP priorities** for the 2014-2020 funding period are centred on viable food production, sustainable management of natural resources and climate action and balanced territorial development (refer to COM(2010)672). Within these broad objectives are more specific objectives of which "*to foster green growth through innovation which requires adopting new technologies, developing new products, changing production processes, and supporting new patterns of demand*" is particularly relevant¹⁶.

Delivering these objectives requires creating, sharing and implementing new knowledge, new technologies, new products and new ways to organise, learn and cooperate. Rural development policy has a long-standing, but indirect, record of stimulating innovation. For the first time in the **current programming period 2014 – 2020, Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 explicitly refers to innovation as a cross-cutting priority** and introduces the EIP, new to rural development policy, as a particularly new element to foster innovation through the second pillar of the CAP.

The EIP was launched to ensure that the activities of innovation actors respond to ground-level needs and that solutions created are taken up by farmers and foresters. It **links the CAP and research policy better**, and works to facilitate a broader uptake of innovative solutions on the ground and to develop a research agenda which is more targeted to farmers' and foresters' needs.

RDPs funded through the EAFRD are one of the main funding streams for financing agricultural and forestry innovation. Funding is available for measures supporting the creation of Operational Groups (discussed in detail in section 2.5 below), advisory services, investments or other approaches. The other important funding instrument is Horizon 2020, the EU's framework programme for Research and Innovation for 2014 – 2020, which is discussed in depth in the next section.

The EIP also relates to the **first pillar of the CAP**, which mainly concerns direct payments to farmers and the rules they have to follow to receive those payments. For example, EIP OGs could address practices related to first pillar payments for Greening,¹⁷ or look for practical solutions to comply with CAP cross-compliance requirements stemming from Nitrates, Habitat, Water, Plant Protection Product Directives etc. or from the rules to keep the land under Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC), or even target sectors under Voluntary Coupled Support (VCS).¹⁸ The topics

¹⁴ In broad terms, the original CAP aimed to secure adequate food production. Due to the success of this system and productivity of the agricultural sector, in the 1980s there was a distinct shift towards stemming overproduction, while later iterations (from the late 1990s / early 2000s) brought a focus on incorporating market mechanisms and limited negative impacts on the environment.

¹⁵ For more information, see URL: <http://ec.europa.eu/resource-efficient-europe/>.

¹⁶ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions The CAP towards 2020: Meeting the food, natural resources and territorial challenges of the future COM(2010)672

¹⁷ Greening is a new policy instrument under the first pillar that links direct payments to practices that are beneficial for the environment. These include crop diversification, maintenance of permanent grassland and safeguarding ecological focus areas.

¹⁸ As defined in Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013, Member State may grant Voluntary Coupled Support to types of farming / specific sectors that are particularly important for economic/social/environmental reasons and undergo certain defined difficulties.

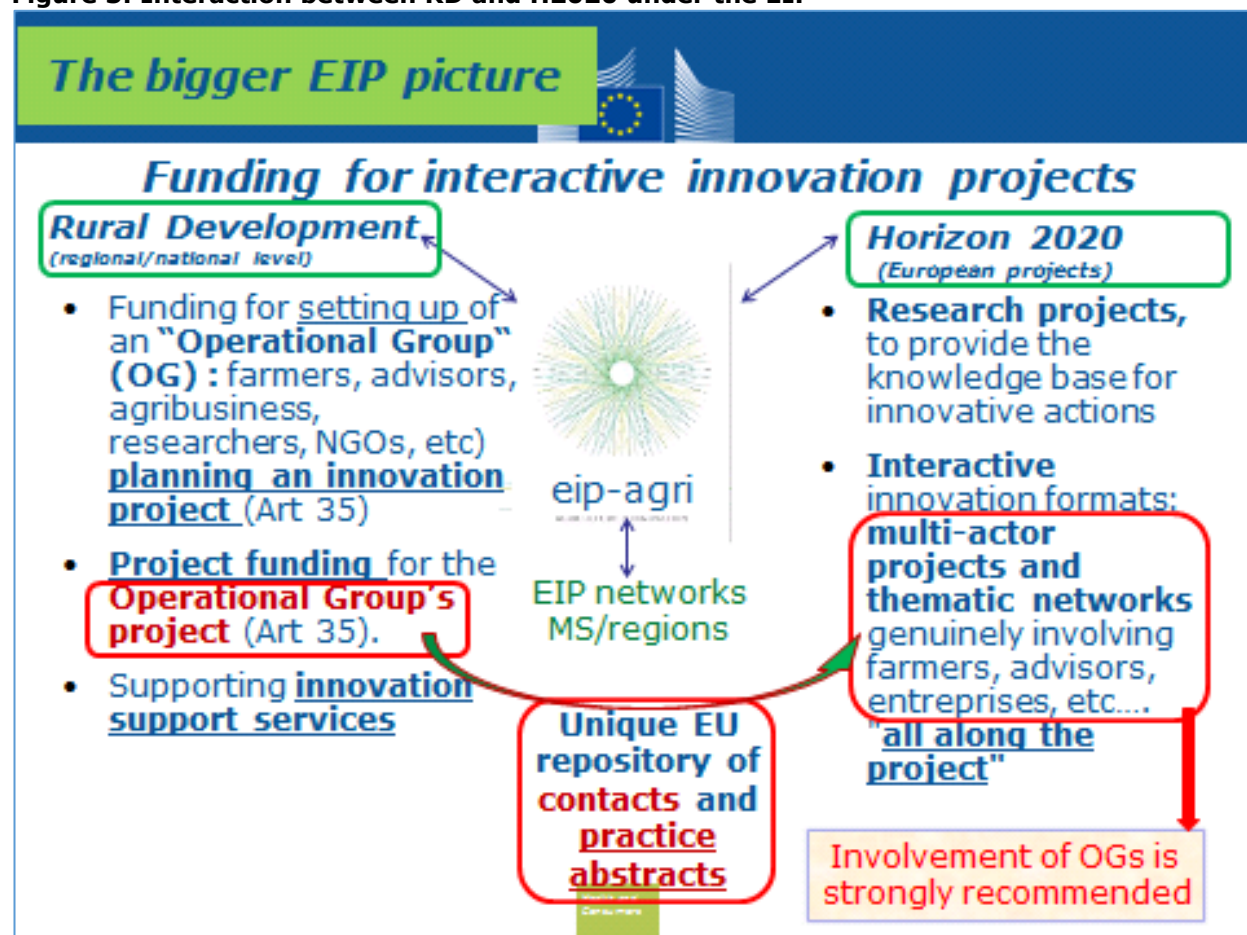
pursued by EIP OGs could furthermore also relate to other CAP regulations, such as the needs of Producer Organisations.

More importantly, the horizontal CAP rules also oblige Member States to set up a Farm Advisory System (FAS) which enables all farmers to benefit from advice among other things on measures provided for in RDPs.¹⁹ Since this includes innovation and other issues to be addressed through EIP OGs, the FAS would be expected to provide actors with advice in this regard.

2.3.2. Relationship of the EIP to Horizon 2020 and other EU policies

There is a solid basis for **external coherence between the EIP and other policies**. At the broader strategic level, initial conditions have been established for the EIP to contribute to Innovation Union. Potential synergies with Horizon 2020, and with environmental and regional policies, are also evident in the legal and programming documents reviewed and in the priorities established by Managing Authorities in the Member States and regions. The links with Horizon 2020 are the most concrete at this early stage of EIP implementation, as depicted in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Interaction between RD and H2020 under the EIP



Source: DG AGRI presentation on the EIP

There are also potential complementarities with environmental and regional funding sources, and dissemination strategies and tools are available and provide a good basis for progress on this front.

¹⁹ For more information on the FAS, see the Commission's dedicated website, URL: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/direct-support/cross-compliance/farm-advisory-system/index_en.htm.

The sub-sections below expand on the relationship between the EIP and other EU policies in greater detail.

Fit with Horizon 2020

Horizon 2020 (H2020) is the EU's main vehicle for funding research collaboration between institutions in different Member States and further afield. Running from 2014 to 2020 with a budget of nearly €80 billion it is the largest ever envelope dedicated to supporting activity of this kind.

Both Rural Development Policy and H2020 aim at demand-driven innovation and complement each other in providing opportunities for EIP Operational Groups (OGs). Rural development programmes are applied within a specific country or region, while research policy co-funds innovative actions at transnational level. In order to be eligible for support under research policy, projects have to involve partners from at least 3 Member States, which encourages cross-border collaboration between partners in different regions.

The **EIP network** and the **common format** for informing and reporting on practical knowledge will help connect OGs funded under Rural Development Policy with H2020 research consortia. In the longer term, the aim is to develop the EIP web database as a unique EU repository for projects with practice impact and as a one-stop-shop for practical knowledge in agriculture.

Of the themes that **H2020** supports, the societal challenge: "Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry, Marine, Maritime and Inland Water Research and the Bio-economy" is relevant to the agriculture sector. In addition to scientist-oriented research projects, Horizon 2020 makes available specific opportunities to support multinational interactive innovation projects in agriculture and forestry through **Thematic Networks and through Multi-actor Projects**.

- **Thematic Networks** are multi-actor projects dedicated to producing material that is easily accessible for practitioners, especially EIP practice abstracts and end-user material (i.e. info sheets, audio-visual material), that remains available beyond the projects and is shared through the EIP network. Projects will synthesise and present best practices and research results with a focus on those which are ready to put in practice, but are not yet known by practitioners. The Thematic Networks funded by H2020 are Coordination and Support Actions (CSA), consisting primarily of accompanying measures involving a range of actors from science and practice that aim to collect existing best practices and research results not sufficiently known and develop accessible material for dissemination, communication and networking, with the ultimate aim of promoting and disseminating existing solutions for the most urgent needs of agriculture and forestry production.
- **Multi-actor Projects** are demand-driven innovation projects and require a close involvement of end-users and multipliers of research results (i.e. farmers and farmers' groups, advisors, enterprises and others), throughout the whole project period. This approach is expected to result in innovative solutions that are more likely to be applied in the field. The European Commission is financing 370 million EUR of support for Multi-actor Projects in the work programme 2016/2017.

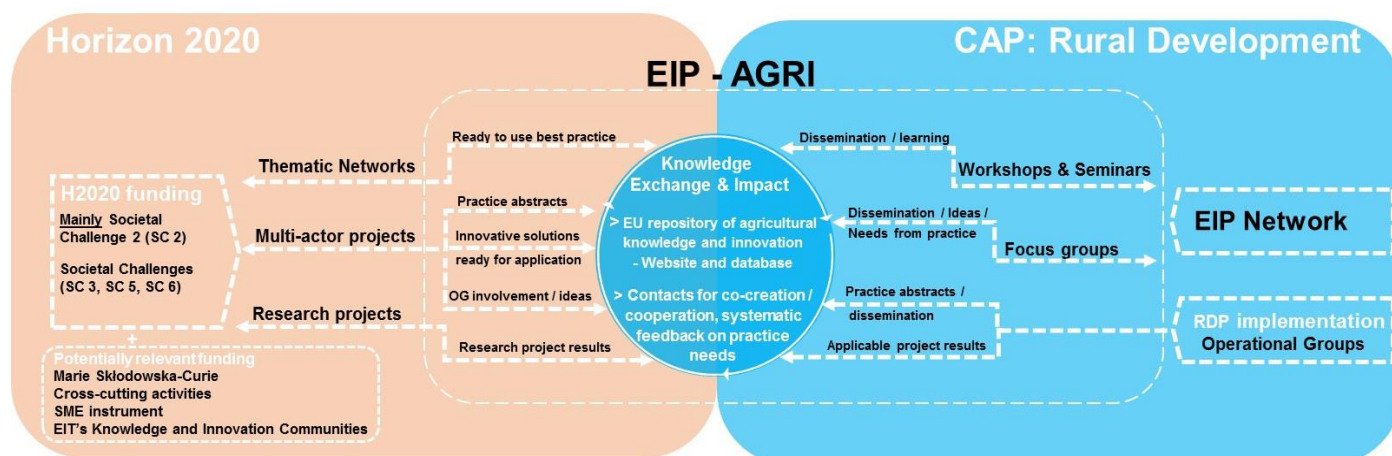
Projects under both of these were made available as from the first and second calls for proposals in 2014-2015, and the current work programme 2016-2017 also supports Thematic Networks (about 5-6 per year) and Multi-actor projects. Taken together, these interactive innovation projects are expected to link with OGs and will produce easily accessible end-user material that can be shared as "practice abstracts" (taking a common format) via the EIP network. They also may provide innovative project ideas to OGs and vice versa. Both Thematic Networks and Multi-actor Projects present interactive and practice-oriented formats that align in principle with the EIP.

Figure 3 below depicts the ways in which the EIP helps to connect Horizon 2020 with the CAP. **H2020 funding** on the one hand supports thematic networks, multi-actor projects and research projects. These instruments in turn result in different outputs, including ready to use best practice, innovative solutions ready for application, as well as results from research projects, practice abstracts and ideas that could be take forward in OGs.

Rural development funding through OGs results in applicable project results disseminated through practice abstracts. The EIP network contributes to dissemination, learning, ideas and identification of needs from practices through the workshops, seminars and focus groups organised.

The EIP is expected to support the **development of an EU repository of agricultural knowledge and innovation** through the EIP website and a database of projects / abstracts for dissemination. It also aims to **foster networking** through making contacts for co-creation, cooperation and the provision of systematic feedback on practice needs.

Figure 4: Strategic fit of the EIP and the Horizon 2020 programme



Source: Evaluation team based on information provided by DG AGRI

Links with EU Environmental Policy

The EU's **Environmental Policy** is extensive and wide-ranging, accounting for in excess of 500 Directives, Regulations and Decisions, covering issues ranging from acid rain to GHG emissions to water pollution. Environmental and climate-related actions are also integrated into major EU spending programmes, including the cohesion policy, regional development, energy, transport, research and innovation and the Common Agricultural Policy.

Clear synergies between environmental policy and the EIP can already easily be identified in priorities in RDPs, in projects implemented by Operational Groups and topics tackled by EIP Focus Groups. Both OGs and Focus Groups will help support the implementation of a number of **key EU environmental directives** such as the Water Framework Directive, the Nitrates Directive, the Habitats Directive, the National Emissions Ceiling Directive, the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive, etc., by looking for practical solutions to fulfil aims and obligations in these Directives.

The EIP is also relevant for the **LIFE Programme**²⁰, which is the financial instrument supporting environmental, nature conservation and climate action projects throughout the EU. Since 1992, LIFE has co-financed over 4,300 projects and, for the period 2014-2020, it will contribute with €3.4 billion to the protection of the environment and climate. Though the potential exists, deeper links with EIP AGRI have so far been developed only to a limited extent. LIFE, for example, promotes the implementation and integration of environment and climate objectives in other policies and Member State practices. In addition, it recognises that effective conservation needs a variety of different stakeholder groups working together, including those who work to protect the land and those that make a living from it. This could create a valuable opportunity for creating stronger links with the EIP.

²⁰ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/>

Also relevant are Integrated Projects funded under the **LIFE+ Programme**, which were introduced in order to implement environmental legislation and goals on a wider scale. It provides funding for plans, programmes and strategies developed on the regional, multi-regional or national level. Projects are characterised by having an all-encompassing approach which ensures the involvement of multiple stakeholders. Of key relevance to EIP is that these projects promote the mobilisation of other funding sources, including EU agricultural and regional funds, as well as national and private funds. OGs could therefore benefit from an improved flow of information through links to LIFE Integrated Projects.

Links with EU Regional Policy

In broad terms, the EU's **Regional Policy** aims to support "job creation, business competitiveness, economic growth, sustainable development, and improve citizens quality of life" across regions and cities across the EU. Regional Policy has a strong impact in many fields. Its investments help to deliver diverse EU policy objectives and complements EU policies including those dealing with research and innovation.

The EU delivers its regional policy goals through three main funds, including the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), as well as the Cohesion Fund (CF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). Together with the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), they make up the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds which have a combined budget of €454 billion for the programming period 2014-20.

The ERDF focuses on several key priority areas relevant for the EIP, including innovation and research; the digital agenda; support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); and the low-carbon economy. In the 2014-2020 programming period, **30% of the total budget allocation is being deployed for innovation** in this wider sense.

The **Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3)** are a key part of the new EU Cohesion Policy. Between 2014 and 2020, RIS3 is a priority for every region within the European Structural and Investment Funds, as well as the Horizon 2020 programme and other initiatives. In effect, such strategies are now a pre-condition for ERDF funding i.e. EU Members States and regions must have RIS3 strategies in place before their Operational Programmes supporting these investments are approved.²¹

In the context of RIS3, the **role of the various innovation stakeholders** and entrepreneurs in each Member State and region is of crucial importance as it is their knowledge and commitment what allows to identify the priority areas and knowledge-based investments that are most likely to deliver growth and jobs in the regions. As of 2016, 85 EU regions indicated 'agri-food' as one of their key investment areas under smart specialisation and a total of over 270 agri-food related RIS3 priorities have been encoded in a recently created database of regions' priorities (the Eye@RIS3 database²²).

This may provide a strong basis for exploiting and improving **synergies and complementarities with the EIP**. A typical example of effective synergy between RD OGs and ERDF funds is funding for thematic platforms and networks under ERDF. For these, stakeholders in particular regions have the potential to network and through this activity could lay the groundwork for setting up OGs together (e.g. RIS3 Communities in Catalonia). Also, rural innovation actors seeking to form an OG may use the Eye@RIS3 database to position themselves, find their niches and seek out potential partners for collaboration. Moreover, projects funded under the implementation of RIS3 strategies can benefit from the EIP network to improve their visibility and share information that could potentially derive in inter-regional collaborations (e.g. Interreg).

Despite the potential identified, a note of caution should be highlighted, in particular as exchanges in the AKIS Strategic Working Group (SWG) have emphasised that links between OG projects and ERDF funding are not yet delivering as intended in practice. Main reasons cited for the weak links include the fact that connections are too complicated for beneficiaries and selection procedures are managed

²¹ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/smart_specialisation_en.pdf

²² <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/eye-ris3>

by different Managing Authorities with scarce cooperation between them. Timing and conditions of calls are very different, which makes it difficult to integrate funds into one project.

In the future, Operational Groups may also use the **Smart Specialisation Platform for Agri-Food** which has recently been launched by the European Commission (DG AGRI, DG REGIO, DG RTD and DG JRC). The Platform aims to promote innovation-driven investment in the domain of agri-food, based on bottom-up interregional cooperation. This initiative is intended to support regions in combining different EU investment instruments to develop their smart specialisation strategies.

2.4. EIP implementation at EU level

2.4.1. Overview of the EIP network

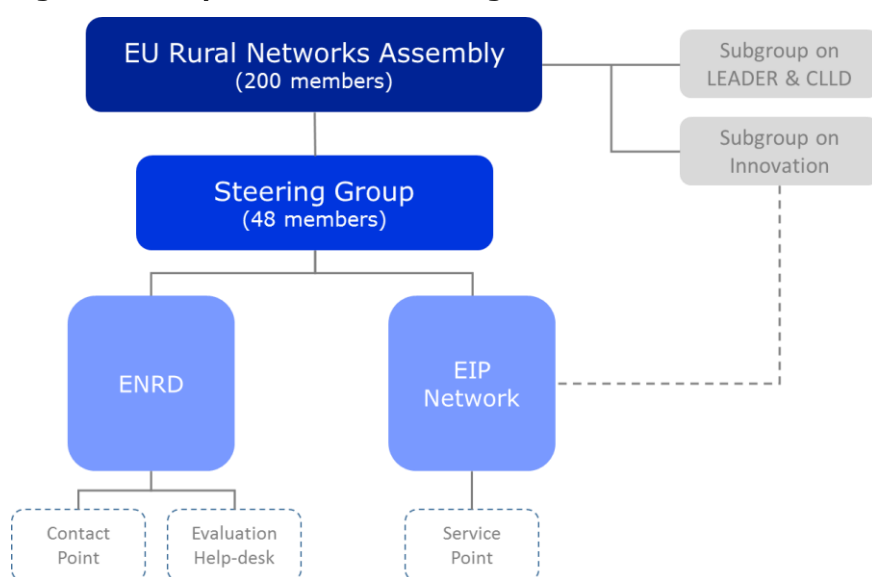
An important element for the implementation of EIP is the **EIP network**. The EIP-AGRI network is run by the European Commission (DG Agriculture and Rural Development) with the help of the Service Point (SP). The SP team facilitates the networking activities, As stipulated in Article 53 of the Regulation (EU) N° 1305/2013, The EIP network is an EU-wide network of agricultural innovation stakeholders (i.e. farmers, forest managers, researchers, advisors, businesses, environmental groups, consumer interest groups and other NGOs) that supports EIP activities through enabling exchange of information and interaction. The ultimate objective of the EIP network is to stimulate dialogue and collaboration between science and practice, and facilitate the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders in the knowledge exchange process.

Moreover, the EIP Network is expected to provide a means for the OGs formed in the different Member States and regions to **establish cross-border connections and create synergies**. But the network is not only for OGs; anyone, including participants in multi-actor projects and thematic networks funded under Horizon 2020 who wants to share and exchange information with others related to specific agricultural issues can participate.

2.4.2. European rural networking structures

The EIP network operates within a broader framework of European rural networking structures which are expected to be **mutually supportive and cooperate** in order to strengthen the flow of information from the national/regional level to the EU level and vice versa (Figure 5).

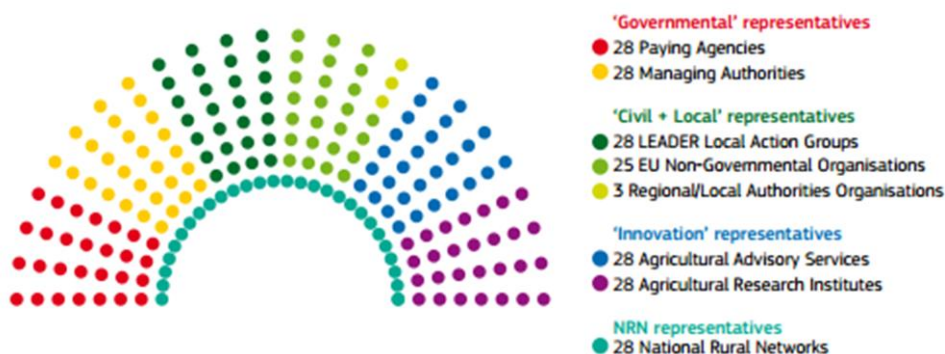
Figure 5: European rural networking structures



Source: Evaluation team, based on document on rural networks governance structure provided by DG AGRI

The **Rural Networks Assembly** is the main governance body of these structures. It provides strategic direction, guidance and advice to the work of the network, which includes the EIP network and the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD). The Assembly meets annually and highlights emerging issues and important topics for the networks to work on. It is made up of up to 200 members representing stakeholder groups, including: National Rural Networks (NRNs), public authorities, European NGOs, Local Action Groups (LAGs), and agricultural research and advisory bodies (see Figure 6 below). There is also a **Rural Networks' Steering Group** composed of 48 representatives that follow-up the work of the networks and subgroups two or three times a year to enhance coordination of thematic work.

Figure 6: Composition of the Rural Networks' Assembly



Source: ENRD – Connecting Rural Europe 2014-2020

The Assembly has two permanent subgroups that facilitate the work of the networks and carry out work on the themes of innovation and LEADER and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)²³. In particular, the **Subgroup on Innovation** is meant to support the EIP network in achieving its aims. It brings together 56 organisations (MAs, NRNs, agricultural advisory services, research institutes, and civil society organisations), meets about three times per year, and has the following objectives²⁴:

- support the implementation of EIP in Rural Development Programmes;
- identify common issues, problems and good practices;
- support networking between OGs;
- provide input for the work programme of the EIP network²⁵; and
- cooperate with the NRNs to support innovation.

As mentioned before, the EIP network works alongside the **ENRD**, which promotes learning and exchange between stakeholders with an interest in promoting rural development in Europe. It was set up to support the networking of national/regional networks, organisations and administrations active in the field of rural development. The ENRD has a Contact Point which supports the running of its activities (workshops and seminars) and coordinates its thematic and analytic work. The ENRD's Evaluation Helpdesk provides specialist support for the evaluation of RDPs.

The ENRD and EIP network share the objective of increasing stakeholders' involvement in rural development and in the knowledge exchange process. However, the main focus of the EIP network is

²³ Additional, non-permanent sub-groups can be given a specific mandate by the Assembly.

²⁴ As described on the EIP website (<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/content/permanent-subgroup-innovation-agricultural-productivity-and-sustainability>)

²⁵ Themes of the EIP network's activities are discussed and narrowed down in the Subgroup of Innovation.

innovation and support to the EIP, by enabling the networking of OGs, farmers, forest managers, researchers, public authorities and other relevant stakeholders.²⁶

Finally, it is important to add that in order to reach all relevant rural innovation stakeholders at national/regional level, the EIP network establishes **links with NRNs/RRNs**. According to the legislation (Art. 54), the tasks of the NRNs with regard to fostering innovation and the EIP are:

- (1) raising awareness,
- (2) networking advisors and innovation support services,
- (3) partner search for OGs,
- (4) collecting and disseminating good examples.

A more detailed description of NRNs is provided in section 3.4.2, but in terms of their relationship with the EIP network, these are expected to collaborate by collecting research needs from practice at national/regional level and feed this information back to the EIP network. In addition, the EIP network provides NRNs with an opportunity to disseminate innovative projects happening at national/regional level across the EU and to advertise their events to a multi-country audience. Cooperation between the networks is therefore intended to be mutually beneficial, as the information that circulates in the EIP network may inspire national/regional stakeholders to set up new OGs, and the EIP is able to reach national/regional stakeholders through the NRNs, as well as collect ideas/needs at national/regional level that can then be translated into a publication or activity.

2.4.3. Management of the EIP network

The running of the EIP network was contracted to a third party, the **EIP-AGRI Service Point**, which handles the day-to-day operational matters and mainly is occupied with facilitating the networking activities under coordination of the European Commission (DG Agriculture and Rural Development). The Service Point's Annual Work Programmes are decided and supervised by DG AGRI and executed by the contractor. The Annual Work Programmes specify the activities and services that will be provided throughout the year, in particular the number and content of Focus Groups, workshops, seminars, and missions to Member States, and activities linking and seeking synergies with the ENRD, NRNs and other relevant organisations. Quarterly Technical Reports and Annual Reports are established for monitoring the contractor's performance in delivering the agreed tasks.²⁷

The total maximum budget for this contract is €2.5 million per contract year, and the contract can be renewed seven times (2014-2020). According to data provided by DG AGRI, the budget spent annually (since the EIP network was established in April 2013) has been of circa €2 million. This covers all EU-level networking activities included in the Annual Work Programmes.

The Service Point²⁸ is composed by a team of 10 Full Time Employees (FTEs) based in Brussels and with various expertise and diverse backgrounds (e.g. agriculture and rural development, rural economy and sociology).

In the following section we provide further details of the activities and services the Service Point provides to facilitate networking of rural innovation stakeholders.

²⁶ Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013, Articles 52 and 53.

²⁷ Tender Specifications for Establishing a Network Facility for the Implementation of the EIP (http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/calls-for-tender/tender-documents/2012/249926/specs_en.pdf)

²⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/content/EIPAGRISP>

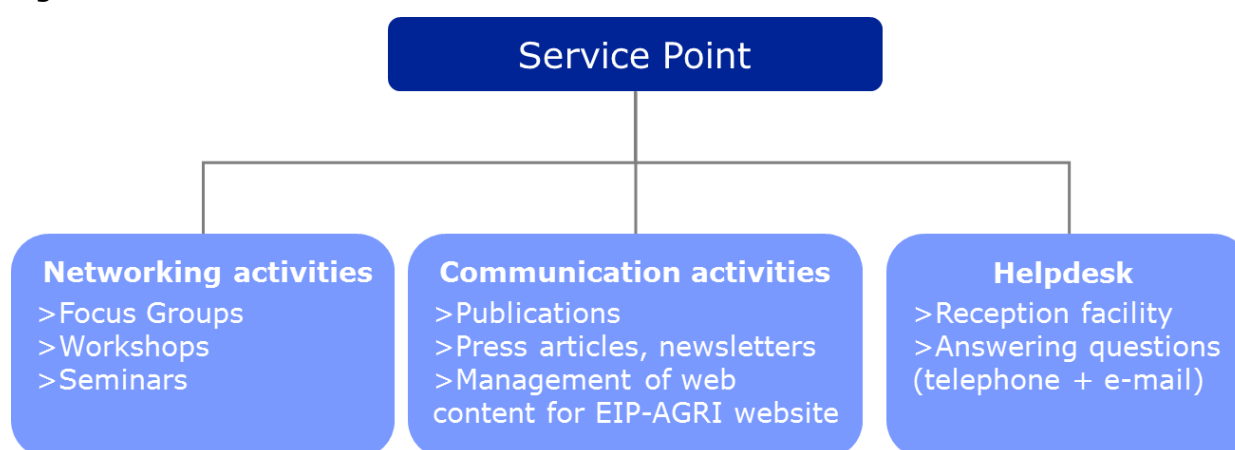
2.4.4. Key tasks of the EIP network

Article 53(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 sets out **four key tasks** for the EIP network:

- provide a help desk function to deliver key information to rural innovation stakeholders concerning the EIP;
- encourage the setting up of OGs and provide information about the opportunities provided by Union policies;
- facilitate the setting up of cluster initiatives and pilot or demonstration projects related to key agricultural issues; and
- collect and disseminate information in the field of the EIP, including research findings and new technologies relevant to innovation and knowledge exchange and exchanges in the field of innovation with third countries.

In line with these requirements, the Service Point set up **three basic tools or services** that support the dissemination and exchange of information and interaction among rural innovation stakeholders:²⁹

Figure 7: Main Service Point functions



Source: Evaluation team based on information provided by Service Point

1. EIP- AGRI networking activities

Focus Groups

The Service Point organises Focus Groups involving 20 experts with different competencies (i.e. farmers, advisors/experts, agro-business representatives and researchers with key expertise in the specific topic covered in each group). Each Focus Group tackles discrete agricultural issues and works to find innovative solutions through discussion, exchange of information and experiences. More concretely, the groups collect and summarise knowledge in a specific field, taking stock of the state of play in research and practice and highlighting possible solutions to the problems identified.

Reports of the Focus Groups are then shared and disseminated through the EIP website. Based on this, the groups also suggest and prioritise some innovative actions related to the field examined and propose ideas that could be taken forward in future OGs. The topics of the groups are discussed with DG AGRI and in the Subgroup of Innovation within the context of the different Annual Work

²⁹ EIP Service Point Brochure: https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/EIP_brochure_service_point_2014_en_web.pdf (in English)

Programmes. Stakeholders can also propose topics via the EIP website. The calls for experts to form the Focus Groups are published also in the website.³⁰ In total, **23 Focus Groups were set up between 2013 and 2016**, covering issues as diverse as organic farming, water and agriculture and agroforestry (see details in table 24 in Annex A).³¹

Once a Focus Group is established, participants normally meet twice over a period of about a year. Together, the experts draft an initial discussion paper and then, over a period of no more than 18 months, they produce a final report. The Annual Work Programmes for the Service Point state that Focus Groups which have published their final report can continue if they wish to do so. They will not be offered financial support but can get a dedicated area on the EIP website.

The Service Point supports the Focus Groups on a number of tasks, including developing road maps for actions and dissemination plans for each group, developing draft agendas and meeting minutes, collecting mini-papers and inputs from expert participants, and elaborating the final Focus Group report.

Workshops and Seminars

The Service Point organises **workshops** (up to 80 participants), **seminars** (up to 150 participants) on dedicated topics in order to discuss with and facilitate the face-to-face contact among rural innovation stakeholders. Reports summarising the outcomes of the events and the event materials (presentations, linked brochures etc.) can be found on the EIP-AGRI website.

These events bring together people from across the agricultural innovation landscape (e.g. farmers, scientists, national/regional/local authorities etc.) and provide an opportunity for closer interaction and exchange of information and experiences. Over the last three years, a range of such activities have been organised, including workshops linked to OGs, workings on specific topics or to follow up on Focus Groups and seminars, as well as on-going engagement different groups of actors. Table 25 in Annex A provides more detail on each of these activities.

2. Communication activities

Publications

The Service Point also produces and distributes a number of **publications**³² including press articles, brochures, factsheets, papers, reports, monthly newsletter³³, and annual magazine³⁴.

It should be mentioned that results of OGs must also be shared through the EIP network. For this, the EIP has a common format for reporting on projects. Multi-actor projects and thematic networks funded under Horizon 2020 are expected to use this common format to disseminate their results too.

This common format consists of a set of basic elements characterising the project and includes one or more "practice abstract"(s). The latter consist of a description of (one of) the challenge(s) the project is tackling (in native language and in English) and short info/recommendation (in native language) of how to solve this challenge in practice. The summary should be as interesting as possible for

³⁰ See for example: <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/content/focus-groups>

³¹ See: <http://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/content/focus-groups>

³² <http://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/publications>

³³ To date, there are 31 newsletters issued in English and French. There are a number of newsletters which have been translated into national language courtesy of some national EIP networks. All newsletters available here: <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/content/previousnewsletter>

³⁴ To date, there are 2 magazines issued in English. All magazines are available here: [https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/publications?f\[0\]=field_publication_type%3A50](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/publications?f[0]=field_publication_type%3A50)

practitioners (i.e. farmers/end-users), using a direct and easy understandable language and pointing out entrepreneurial elements.³⁵

Animation of the EIP-AGRI website³⁶

The EIP-AGRI website works as an interactive web platform facilitating the collection and circulation of ideas for new projects or information on projects that have already started, as well as specific practical research needs. Through specific sites ("Share" and "Meeting Point")³⁷, users can share and search for ideas, projects, research needs, funding opportunities, experts, and partners for projects. To implement this, the Service Point created e-forms that can be filled in by people who want to share and exchange their information with others³⁸. The website also provides a calendar of past and upcoming events. The goal is to make it the 'one-stop-shop' for agricultural innovation in the EU.

3. Help-desk

The help-desk is available to provide information on questions on the EIP, including in relation to funding opportunities, upcoming events, information on OGs and other issues of interest for rural stakeholders. There is a reception facility to receive visitors and have personal contacts. Questions can be submitted through an online form, but also personally, by telephone or by e-mail.

Beyond the services mentioned above, the Service Point delivers some **additional networking and communication tools** such as:

- Field visits to innovative projects which are activated to Focus Group meetings and linked to some of the organised workshops.
- Missions to Member States
- Update and maintenance of a database of people, ideas and projects which can be publicly accessed via the EIP website and that should link with databases of the ENRD and of the European Evaluation Network and databases set up under other EIPs, and other national/regional/project databases
- Compilation and update of mailing lists for direct mailing and newsletters
- Maintenance of a list of external experts that can contribute to EIP network activities
- Relations with traditional media and social media in each Member State
- Updating and maintaining and master database with sub-databases

2.4.5. Monitoring and evaluation

The **added value of the EIP network** relies on that it establishes mechanisms to facilitate cross-border interaction and partnerships among rural innovation stakeholders. In particular, it can effectively capture and disseminate knowledge from the individual OGs to other relevant OGs and innovation actors across the EU (including multi-actor projects and thematic networks funded under Horizon 2020). According to members of the Service Point, there is a high level of interest and enthusiasm about the EIP network (and its activities) among innovation actors in many countries. In terms of awareness, among respondents to the survey of rural innovation stakeholders carried out for the current evaluation, 20% had already dealt with the network directly. A further 34% of respondents

³⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/eip_common_format_-_14_oct_2015.pdf

³⁶ The website (ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/) is online from May 2014.

³⁷ <http://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/node/49>

³⁸ The e-forms also facilitate the reporting requirements for OGs, which are obliged to submit key data to the EIP network using one of these forms.

knew of the network's activities and 33% had at least heard of the EIP network. Only 13% said they had never heard of it.³⁹

A **system** is in place to monitor the network's activities (e.g. Focus Groups) and outputs (e.g. Focus Group reports) and assess the extent to which they are being taken-up by stakeholders (e.g. put into a project proposal, addressed by an OG). Given the early stage in EIP implementation, this has so far consisted mainly of on-going monitoring of the network's activities. In addition, there have been some attempts to **examine the functioning and performance** of the EIP network, for example, in the context of a workshop dedicated to the exchange of the first experiences of OGs and their supporting environment, to learn about how the EIP network can support their activities (April 2016)⁴⁰.

2.5. EIP implementation at national and regional level

This section elaborates on the implementation of the EIP at Member State and regional levels, most importantly through the set-up and operation of Operational Groups. After a high-level introduction to Rural Development Programmes, national Rural Networks and Operational Groups, the majority of the section is devoted to describing how the EIP is being implemented in the Member States and regions of the EU. A final section explains the situation of the two countries that have chosen not to implement the EIP.

2.5.1. Overall context

Rural Development Programmes

Rural development strategies in MS are implemented through **Rural Development Programmes (RDPs)**. These are comprehensive programming documents that explain how European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) funding (in addition to MS-level match-funding) will be spent, according to rules laid down in the EAFRD Regulation⁴¹ and several delegated and implementing acts.⁴²

The process for **designing RDPs** was multi-staged, involved many partners, and varied by Member State / region.⁴³ However, in all cases RDPs had to reflect Member State / regional strategic and EU priorities as identified through ex ante evaluations and SWOT analyses.⁴⁴

RDPs are implemented at the **national or regional level or a combination of the two**. For instance, more than one programme have been adopted in France (30), Italy (23), Spain (19), Germany (15), the United Kingdom (4 RDPs), Portugal (3 RDPs), Belgium and Finland (2 RDPs each); one RDP has been adopted in each of the other 20 MS.

The adoption of Greece's Rural Development Programme in December 2015 marked the **end of the adoption process for all 118 programmes for the 2014-2020 period**. With €99.6 billion from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and another €60.6 billion of co-funding from national and regional public funds or private investment, the RDPs are expected to help European

³⁹ The survey was conducted online in six EU languages, including English, French, German, Italian, Polish and Spanish, and targeted at key stakeholders across the EU, including farmers, forest managers, advisors, researchers / scientists, businesses in the food chain, government authorities and NGOs. It was mainly promoted via a link to the questionnaire on the EIP website and through invitations sent (with the link) to MAs and NRNs in the Member States. DG AGRI also used its Twitter account to promote the survey. In total, **451 responses** were collected and analysed.

⁴⁰ <http://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/content/eip-agri-workshop-operational-groups-first-experiences>

⁴¹ Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development; the Regulation and relevant delegated and implementing acts are summarised on DG AGRI's rural website, URL: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-development-2014-2020/index_en.htm.

⁴² Implementing Regulation 808/2014.

⁴³ As determined in "Partnership Agreements" which map out the use of ESIF to pursue Europe 2020 objectives. See http://ec.europa.eu/contracts_grants/agreements/index_en.htm

⁴⁴ As determined in "Partnership Agreements" which map out the use of ESIF to pursue Europe 2020 objectives. See http://ec.europa.eu/contracts_grants/agreements/index_en.htm

rural areas and communities face the current economic, environmental and social challenges, and take advantage of the opportunities ahead of them.

While innovation is a horizontal priority in the EAFRD Regulation, Member States can choose whether to programme for and implement the EIP, or whether to pursue innovation only through other measures. The vast majority of Member States have decided to programme for and implement the EIP. Of the 111 RDPs which might have included support for the EIP,⁴⁵ 96 have done so, as summarised in the table below.

Table 3: RDPs that support EIP OGs

	Member State	Programming for the EIP	Number of RDPs
National approach	AT, BG, CY, CZ, DK**, IE, EL, HR, LT, HU, LV*, MT, NL, PL, RO, SI, SK, SE	√	18 RDPs
	EE, LU	X	-
Regional approach	BE	√	1 RDP
	DE	√	12 RDPs
	FI	√	1 RDP
	FR	√	24 RDPs
	IT	√	20 RDPs
	PT	√	3 RDPs
	ES	√	13 RDPs
	UK	√	4 RDPs
Total	26* MS		96* RDPs

Source: Evaluation team based on available information on Rural Development Programmes 2014 – 2020

(*) LV amendment to its RDP will add the EIP

(**) DK is a special case, because while it programmes for measure 16.1 (the main measure for EIP support), it has not planned any OGs. As a result of a longstanding agricultural tradition and an innovative agricultural sector, R&D links between researchers and farmers in Denmark are very strong and there are a number of existing schemes (e.g. the Ministry of Environment and Food's *Green Development and Demonstration Programme*) that serve a similar aim to that of the EIP. In view of the Danish MA, the administrative burden of implementing OGs would not be worth given the limited benefits that the scheme would bring.

Each RDP, national or regional, must programme for at least four of the **six common priorities** addressed in the Rural Development Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013): knowledge and innovation, competitiveness, better food chain organisation, preserving ecosystems, resource efficiency, and social inclusion. These priorities also reflect the extent to which RDP funding has a beneficial impact on society in general and not just on the farming and other rural communities.

The table below outlines funding percentages and targets set for each of the six priorities.

⁴⁵ While there are a total of 118 RDPs, eight of them are national framework programmes or National Rural Network programmes that do not cover specific regions and would therefore not be expected to programme for the EIP. The exception to this is Spain, which has programmed for OGs in its national framework RDP.

Table 4: Funding and targets for the six common priorities

Key RD priorities	Funding (%)	Targets 2014 – 2020	
Knowledge and innovation	Cross-cutting priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.9 million training places • 3.9% of expenditure on knowledge transfer, advice and cooperation • 15,250 co-operation projects 	
Competitiveness	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 335,000 agricultural holdings with RDP support for investments in restructuring or modernisation (2.8% of holdings) • 175,500 agricultural holdings with RDP supported business development plan/investments for young farmers (1.5% of holdings) 	
Better food chain organisation	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 300,000 agricultural holdings receiving support for participating in quality schemes, local markets and short supply circuits, and producer groups/ organisations • 645,000 agricultural holdings participating in risk management schemes 	
Preserving ecosystems	44%	Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17.7% of agricultural land; and • 3.45% of forest area under management contracts supporting biodiversity and/or landscape
		Water management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15% of agricultural land; and • 4.3% of forestry land under management contracts to improve water management
		Soil management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14.3% of agricultural land; and • 3.6% of forestry land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent erosion
Resource efficiency	8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.6% of agricultural land under management contracts targeting reduction of GHG and/or ammonia emissions • 2% of livestock units concerned by investments in live-stock management in view of reducing GHG and/or ammonia emissions • 15% of irrigated land switching to more efficient irrigation systems • € 2.8 billion total investment in energy efficiency • € 2.7 billion invested in renewable energy production • 4% of agricultural and forestry land under management to foster carbon sequestration/conservation 	
Social inclusion	15%	Job creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 117,500 non-agricultural new jobs directly created, of which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 73,000 in relation to diversification actions and creation and development of small enterprises - 44,500 through LEADER groups

Key RD priorities	Funding (%)	Targets 2014 – 2020	
		Local development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 51 million rural citizens benefitting from improved services • 153 million rural citizens coming under a local development strategy • 18 million rural citizens benefitting from improved access to ICT services and infrastructure

Source: Evaluation team based on available information on Rural Development Programmes 2014 – 2020

As part of the process of setting up and adopting an RDP, a **Performance Framework** was submitted⁴⁶, which provided information on the quantitative and qualitative targets defined for each RDP, and thus contributed inputs to the assessment of the achievements of EIP through RDPs.

National Rural Networks

National Rural Networks (NRNs)⁴⁷ also play an important role in rural development, particularly with regard to cooperation and the EIP. These have been in place in every Member State to provide a formal link between national administrations and organisations involved in rural development since 2007. In the EAFRD 2014-2020 programming period, their role has evolved such that NRNs are required to carry out the following specific (mandatory) tasks, namely to:

- increase the involvement of stakeholders⁴⁸ in the implementation of rural development;
- improve the quality of implementation of rural development programmes;
- inform the broader public and potential beneficiaries on rural development policy and funding opportunities; and
- foster innovation in agriculture, food production, forestry and rural areas.

In practical terms, so-called “National Support Units” (NSUs) support the undertaking of these tasks at the national level. Some regions also organise rural networking at the regional level. NSUs can operate within the national or regional authority or outsourced to an external entity or a mixture (i.e. where the national administration and an external entity cooperate).

Each NRN and NSU is required to develop an intervention logic and corresponding Action and Communication Plan which identifies the actions based on identified strategic priorities (as per discussions with stakeholders and the RDP).

The implementation of the NRN and NSU involves among others the organisation of collaborative events (e.g. workshops), the creation of tools to support communication (especially the sharing of best practice, translation of EU level information, search for partners and a helpdesk function). In turn, these networking and facilitation activities serve as one of the tools to support implementation of the RDP and the EIP.

In the current programming period, three Member States (Germany, Italy and France) have taken up the option of full programmes for their National Rural Networks. The National Rural Network Programmes (NRNPs) play a role in supporting the EIP process in these countries.

⁴⁶ A performance review will be conducted in 2019. The performance framework consists of milestones and targets for each priority (with the exception of technical assistance and programmes dedicated to financial instruments) for the years 2018

⁴⁷ required as part of the EAFRD Regulation

⁴⁸ Farmers and farmer organisations; environmental organisations; LAGs; local / regional public administration; forester and forester’s organisations; research organisations and universities

Operational Groups

The EIP is funded mainly through Member States' RDPs' support for the innovative **projects of 'Operational Groups' (OGs)**. In simple terms, OGs are groups made up of a combination of farmers, forest managers, researchers, NGOs and other actors involved in the agricultural and / or forestry sectors that are characterised by the following key features:

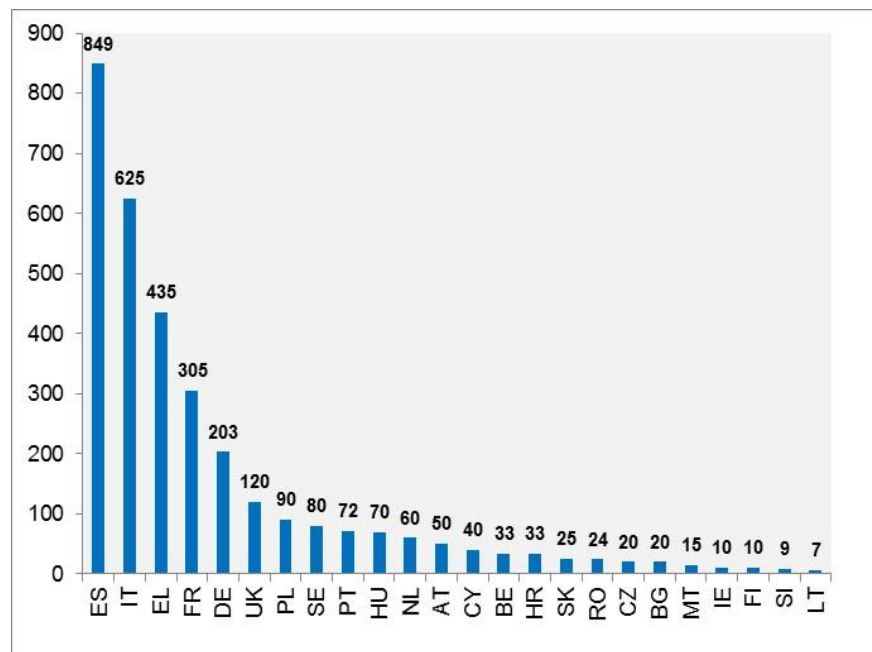
- **Purpose:** OGs are project-based and set up by a group of specific relevant actors with the purpose of finding concrete, practical solutions to address problems or innovation opportunities for farmers/foresters. OGs follow an interactive innovation model, using bottom-up approaches for defining the project objective and linking farmers, advisors, researchers, businesses and other stakeholders to build and exchange knowledge that will generate new insights and shape existing tacit knowledge into focused solutions. The buy-in and motivation generated among actors involved in OGs is meant to increase the likelihood that and speed with which the solutions found are put into practice.
- **Themes:** The themes OGs can cover are defined broadly in Article 55 of the Regulation. Innovation themes may come bottom-up from the potential OGs but individual MS / regions may also focus OGs on certain priority areas defined in the SWOT analysis conducted during the preparation of each RDP.
- **Formation:** Support is made available for the setting up and / or projects of OGs. The majority of RDPs cover direct costs related to the preparation of OG projects (including preparatory studies, staff, organisation, travel fees, etc.) and to the implementation of projects (including staff, organisation, travel fees, experiments, deliverables, translations, etc.). Many RDPs also cover costs related to the dissemination of the results of projects selected, including for example Ireland, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and in Italy and Basque Country in Spain. In a few cases, e.g. Portugal, costs related to the monitoring and evaluation of projects are also mentioned. Certain costs are not eligible, including for example, stand alone or initial research. The formation of OGs is based on the initiative of the innovation actors. The OGs must tackle the practical needs of farmers / foresters, and are structured accordingly (meaning that in some cases certain types of actors may not be needed).
- **Rate of support (as a percentage of total eligible costs):** Support rates tend to vary in some regions / countries. In many cases (e.g. Croatia, Finland, Rhône Alps in France, Baden Wuerttemberg in Germany, Ireland, Tuscany in Italy, Malta, Slovakia, Slovenia, Andalusia and Murcia in Spain, England, Scotland and Wales in the UK), the RDPs offer to support 100% of eligible costs. In a few cases, e.g. Sweden, support rates are not set in the RDPs.
- **Principles for selection criteria:** Each RDP delineates a number of principles for selecting OGs. The complementary composition of OGs is a relevant criteria in the majority of RDPs reviewed. Other important selection criteria include the benefits of the projects, their innovation potential, the added value of the proposed actions in relation to identified practical needs and plans for dissemination. One RDP among those reviewed (Basque Country in Spain) is using identified links to other funding sources as a selection criterion, which will limit the choice of potential OGs.
- **Geographic scope:** Normally OGs act within their RD programming area. However, there are possibilities for cross-border OGs (both across RDPs within a single Member State and transnational between different Member States) and specific funding through EAFRD.
- **Size of OGs:** the main objective is for the OGs to tackle bottom-up needs/opportunities identified by farmers and foresters. There is no need for a high number of partners but it is key to combine the complementary knowledge needed (practical, organisational, or scientific).
- **Activities:** there are various types of activities eligible for support through the OGs, including the development of new products or practices, pilot projects, short supply chain cooperation, joint environmental project approaches, climate change actions, cooperation in biomass provision or renewable energy, forest management, etc.

- **Innovation support services:** there are different types of help to support the OGs, including innovation brokers who provide help to start up a specific group / prepare a project; facilitators, who play an intermediate role in facilitating the project; and innovation support services, covering the former roles of brokering and facilitation and also further innovation support (e.g. promotion of innovation funding, dissemination, thematic networking, innovation prizes, etc.). The role of National Rural Networks (NRNs) and of regional/thematic networks is also key for networking and supporting search for partners.
- **Dissemination of results:** the OGs are charged with informing on their project objectives as from the start of their project and disseminating the results of their project, freely available to all, in particular through the EIP network.

The **number of OGs** foreseen during the programming period varies per RDP depending on the implementation choices of the Member States / regions and is depicted in the figure on the next page. In total, it is estimated that 3,205 Operational Groups (OGs) will be established under the approved RDPs (2014-2020). Spain stands out as the country with the largest number of planned OGs (849), followed by Italy (625), Greece (435), France (305), Germany (203) and the UK (120). With the exception of Greece (which has one RDP), which has programmed for a very large number of OGs for the programming period (435), Member States with multiple RDPs envisage larger numbers of planned OGs than countries with single national RDPs, controlling for population size and per capita rural development spending. Lithuania is the country with the lowest number of planned OGs (7), followed closely by Slovenia (9), Finland (10), Ireland (10), Malta (15), Czech Republic and Bulgaria (20 each).

It should also be noted that **Managing Authorities are free to refine their programming choices over time**, based on lessons learned from their own and others' experiences as well as evolving circumstances. For example, an RDP might initially programme for ten relatively large OGs, but later decide that practical innovation problems are better addressed by more, but smaller, OGs. This means that the number of OGs that are implemented in practice may differ considerably from the expected figures presented in the diagram.

Figure 8: Number of planned EIP OGs in the approved RDPs (2014 – 2020)



Source: Evaluation team based on presentations at the fourth meeting of the permanent Subgroup on Innovation for agricultural productivity and sustainability

2.5.2. Countries and regions implementing the EIP

This section examines the choices made by the Member States for implementing the EIP so far. In particular, it includes an overview of the measures being used to programme for the EIP, financial resources and envisaged spending, arrangements regarding innovation brokering, the role of national / regional Rural Networks, priority themes and sectors, beneficiaries supported, cross border arrangements and initial outputs / results of the first calls for project proposals.

As mentioned above, the EIP is being **implemented in 96 RDPs across 26 Member States**. The countries and regions involved are highly diverse, and rural development support allows them a high degree of flexibility to programme for national and regional prerogatives. The upshot is substantial variety in the approaches to the EIP being pursued.

In order to organise our description of Member State / regional choices for the EIP (as well as to guide our selection of a sub-set of them for in-depth study), we have grouped RDPs in terms of a **typology** (see overview in the box at right). The ensuing pages explain the main features of the typology, illustrate how the Member States and regions implementing the EIP fit into it and present some thoughts about its uses and limitations as an analytical tool for the purposes of this study.

Typology of countries / regions implementing the EIP

To construct the typology, we looked at some of the key choices surrounding the implementation of the EIP with a view to identifying specific variables that would allow us to group the RDPs in as meaningful a way as possible. This meant choosing variables for which sufficient data would be available based on the available information. We also needed to limit ourselves to factors that could meaningfully be divided into categories. Ideally these should fit neatly into an ordinal or interval scale, allowing for some quantitative comparison, but we also considered nominal variables.⁴⁹ These considerations led us to a typology based on two dimensions, namely the envisaged average budget for OGs and the prescriptiveness in the approach to selecting topics to be address in OG projects.

A **typology is an organised systems of types** that divides a population into groups or 'types' based on one or more shared attributes. The elements within a type should be as similar as possible (internal heterogeneity) and the differences between the types as strong as possible (external heterogeneity).

*Dimension 1: envisaged average budget for individual Operational Groups (large / medium / small)*⁵⁰

Managing Authorities decide how much funding to make available for individual OGs and this varies significantly across and within Member States / regions. Looking in aggregate at the envisaged average budget for individual OGs is useful, partly because it is readily comparable; all RDPs which programme for the EIP can be placed on a spectrum determined by the average amount of funding they provide per individual OG. But more importantly because it tells us a lot about the **nature of the projects** Managing Authorities plan to support and will determine how many OGs and themes can be supported with a total fixed budget for the measure.

More precisely, **relatively small (less than EUR 100,000) average budgets** per OG show a preference for projects aimed at answering (practical) questions by a targeted set of innovation actors directly working to address a focused problem. The EIP guidelines draw attention to this ("The EIP aims at a flexible and open system for the creation of a *multiplicity* of Operational Groups", " An Operational Group is meant to be "operational" and tackle a certain (practical) problem or opportunity

⁴⁹ Interval scales are scales in which there is a defined and uniform difference between values (e.g. degrees Celsius); ordinal scales have a definite order, but the difference between values is not uniform and defined (e.g. less happy, happy, and very happy); nominal scales are labels with no quantitative value (e.g. male, female).

⁵⁰ It is important to note that the information relevant for this dimension is not published in RDPs. These provide aggregate figures for the entirety of measure 16, but since OGs are mainly supported through sub-measure 16.1, and since the other sub-measures fund things that are not OGs, the data is insufficient. In order to find the necessary information we thus surveyed Managing Authorities by telephone and email. They were able to provide estimated figures for average individual OG budgets. Importantly, the figures included funding from measure 16.1 and other sub-measures, where applicable.

that may lead to an innovative solution. Therefore, Operational Groups have to draw up a plan, describing their specific project and the expected results of the project")

Larger average budgets (greater than EUR 300,000) imply projects that may bring together relatively more stakeholders, with a view to addressing (a broader variety of) questions at regional / national level. Larger budgets per OG may also mean a small number of actors tackling bigger problems. Alternatively, they may show that the subject of the OG is not sufficiently specified, that too many "stakeholders"/"representatives" are associated with (but not necessarily "active" in) the OG project activities or that substantial physical investment is involved. Given the broader subjects such projects are likely to cover, their success relies to a larger extent on the setting-up stage, particularly the need for a detailed work plan and rigorous selection criteria and procedures. A larger budget per OG limits the number of themes/problems to be tackled and the number of groups entitled to be active in the EIP framework.

Average budgets that are **neither small nor large (from EUR 100,000 to EUR 300,000)** indicate an intermediate approach between the 2 former types.

Dimension 2: Prescriptiveness in the approach to selecting Operational Groups (restrictive / open)

The EIP aims to encourage new groups of actors to come together to share ideas, work together and develop solutions in innovative ways. However, Managing Authorities decide (within the provisions of the Regulation) whether and to what extent key features of OG design (such as their form, scale, focus, types of partnerships, potential beneficiaries etc.) should be defined in advance or left to OGs themselves.

Whether Managing Authorities are restrictive or open in terms of how they define the parameters for and select OGs is a key distinguishing feature of the different approaches to the EIP. It also has substantial effects on the kinds of projects that are funded and their practical implementation, hence it provided a useful dimension for the typology.

More specifically, **openness** indicates that the Managing Authority is keen to support project ideas that have come in a bottom up manner. Alternatively, **restrictiveness** indicates a top-down approach, whereby OGs only address priorities as defined by Managing Authorities.

This criterion shows whether a Managing Authority prefers an **open approach**, supporting project ideas that have come from individual actors, in a bottom up inclusive manner. Alternatively a Managing Authority may be more **restrictive**, defining key parameters of OGs at RDP level before any OGs are established (or allowing room for bottom-up initiatives within a more defined topic area). This is important as it shows the degree to which Managing Authorities wish to be prescriptive about the innovation challenges for OGs tackle.

In practical terms, the best available indicator of restrictiveness / openness relates to the approach taken by Managing Authorities to defining the themes for OGs to address. For our purposes, under a restrictive approach, Managing Authorities pre-define themes in terms of the focus areas identified in the SWOT analysis without any option to leave a theme open for bottom-up innovative ideas. An open approach entails allowing OGs to propose any projects within the broad aims laid out in Article 55 of the Regulation.

Having identified and agreed the two dimensions on which to base the typology, we grouped the Member States and regions which have made similar choices for EIP implementation. The table on the next page presents the typology applied to the countries and regions for which data were available. Of the 96 RDPs that are programming for the EIP, we were able to fully report on 84 of them. For a further five regions we obtained the data needed to distinguish between open and restrictive approaches to the EIP, but could not collect information on the MAs' envisaged OG budgets. Of the remaining seven RDPs, the Managing Authorities in five of them (Thuringia, Germany; Calabria and Trento in Italy; and Azores and Madeira in Portugal) did not respond to our requests to provide information. Finally, Denmark and Latvia are not included in the typology because they had not planned any OGs as of June 2016. Note that the 20 starred and bolded countries and regions were selected for in-depth case studies, as explained in section 3.1.

Table 5: EIP typology

		Dimension 1: Average funding per Operational Group		
		Small	Medium	Large
		Up to €100,000	From €100,000 to €300,000 per OG	More than €300,000 per OG
Dimension 2: Prescriptiveness of approach to selecting Operational Groups	Open OGs free to propose themes <i>NB: the following MS / regions take an open approach but we have not received budgetary data: Bolzano, Italy; Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany; Saxony Anhalt, Germany; Malta; Madrid, Spain</i>	Type 1: small & open Flanders* (BE) Asturias (ES) Wales* (UK)	Type 2: medium & open Finland Martinique (FR) Picardie (FR) Baden- Württemberg (DE) Hessen (DE) Saxony (DE) Greece* Hungary Abruzzo (IT) Andalusia* (ES) Galicia (ES) La Rioja (ES) Murcia (ES) National RDP (ES) England* (UK) Northern Ireland (UK)	Type 3: large and open Guyane (FR) Haute-Normandie (FR) Niedersachsen and Bremen (DE) North-Rhine Westphalia (DE) Schleswig-Holstein (DE) Ireland Basilicata (IT) Campania (IT) Piedmont (IT) Sardinia (IT) Sicily (IT) Veneto* (IT) Poland* Portugal (Mainland) Romania Sweden* Scotland* (UK)
	Restrictive OGs must choose from pre-defined focus areas	Type 4: small & restrictive Cyprus Limousin (FR) Réunion (FR) Liguria (IT) Basque Country* (ES) Slovakia	Type 5: medium & restrictive Austria Croatia* Aquitaine (FR) Corsica (FR) Lorraine (FR) Midi-Pyrénées* (FR) Pays de la Loire (FR) Rhône-Alpes* (FR) Rhineland-Palatinate* (DE) Bavaria (DE) Emilia Romagna* (IT) Lombardy (IT) Lazio (IT) Netherlands Slovenia Aragon (ES) Canary Islands (ES) Castilla y Leon (ES) Catalonia* (ES) Extremadura (ES)	Type 6: large & restrictive Bulgaria* Czech Republic Auvergne (FR) Basse Normandie (FR) Burgundy (FR) Brittany* (FR) Centre – Val de Loire (FR) Champagne-Ardenne (FR) Guadeloupe (FR) Ile de France (FR) Languedoc Roussillon (FR) Mayotte (FR) PACA (FR) Poitou-Charentes (FR) Berlin and Brandenburg* (DE) Friuli-Venezia-Giulia (IT) Marche (IT) Molise (IT) Puglia* (IT) Tuscany (IT) Umbria (IT) Lithuania
NB: Data were unavailable for Thuringia, Germany; Calabria and Trento in Italy; and Azores and Madeira in Portugal. Denmark and Latvia are not included in the typology because they had not planned any OGs as of June 2016				

It is important to note some limitations to the typology. Firstly, while the typology **reflects choices Member States / regions have made at this initial stage of EIP implementation**. It is highly possible (and desirable) that some Member States / regions will adjust their approaches over future years based on their own and others' experiences. Hence the typology should be considered a snapshot of the status of EIP implementation at in early-to-mid 2016, when the information was obtained.

It must also be pointed out that we have **not found strong links between the typology and other programming decisions** of interest. In other words, while the typology is useful for breaking the many RDPs into more manageable chunks, it does not provide a particularly useful framework for examining key trends and features. For this reason, the ensuing analysis uses the types to shape the narrative but in discusses the RDPs in more general terms in order to give shape to the narrative.

The sub-sections below present an analysis of EIP implementation in the countries and regions in terms of four distinct sub-sections:

- i. Measures used to programme for the EIP
- ii. Financial resources and envisaged spending
- iii. Arrangements regarding innovation brokering
- iv. The role of national / regional Rural Networks
- v. Priority themes and sectors
- vi. Beneficiaries supported,
- vii. Cross-border arrangements; and
- viii. Initial outputs / results of first calls for proposals

Where possible, this analysis draws on data from the vast majority of RDPs. However, in some cases we required a level of detail that was only available in the information collected for in-depth study of 20 RDPs.

i. Measures used to programme for EIP OGs

The Member States / regions have considerable flexibility in the measures they use to programme for the EIP in RDPs, in **accordance with the stipulations in the EAFRD Regulation**. To assist Managing Authorities in their programming decisions, DG AGRI has guidelines for the EIP⁵¹ and for the co-operation measure (measure 16), which is the main measure for implementing the EIP.⁵² The following paragraph sub-section briefly summarises the choices at Managing Authorities' disposal. This is followed with an overview of the measures being used to implement the EIP in a sample of 37 RDPs, including the 20 regions where we conducted in-depth study and 17 additional RDPs for where we undertook desk research.

Measure 16 (co-operation) is the main measure for implementing the EIP. More specifically, sub-measure 16.1 allows RDPs to support both the set-up and running of OGs. Depending on the characteristics of individual OGs, the support should normally fit the description of one of the other nine co-operation sub-measures. In addition, Managing Authorities have the option of using something called the "global amount" approach to combine funding under the co-operation with other measures to support the direct costs of the work being done by OGs.

The table below shows the **measures and sub-measures programmed for in 37 RDPS**, based on RDP documentation and interviews with Managing Authorities. Two key points are clear from the data. First, **nearly half of the RDPs examined (18) only envisage the main sub-measure 16.1** to support EIP OGs. For those that are also planning to use other measure 16 sub-measures, 16.2 (support for pilot projects and the development of new products, practices and technologies) is by far

⁵¹ Guidelines on programming for innovation and the implementation of the EIP for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability.

⁵² Guidance document, "Co-operation" measure, URL: http://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/16_measure_fiche_art_35_co-operation.pdf.

the most used, with a further seventeen RDPs. Seven RDPs plan to use sub-measure 16.4, and a further three RDPs plan to use sub-measure 16.5.

The second important point is that **only seven of the 37 RDPs examined plan to use other measures** to support EIP OGs. Croatia, Mainland Finland, Slovakia and Sweden envisage using measure 4 (investments in physical assets) to allow OGs to purchase equipment and other assets that might be needed for the operation of OGs. Bulgaria, Croatia, Mainland Finland, Mainland Portugal, Slovakia and Wales plan on making use of support available for knowledge transfer and information actions (measure 1), while these same countries (with the exception of Finland) also foresee support for advisory services (measure 2), such as the training of advisors, as part of their support for OGs. Given the early stage of implementation and the newness of the EIP, it is possible that there will be greater uptake in the use of other measures as Managing Authorities accumulate practical experience and learn from examples.

Table 6: Measures used to programme for EIP OGs

(Sub)-measure programmed for to implement the EIP	Country / region		
	Measure 16 (co-operation)		
Only 16.1: support for the establishment and operation of operational groups of the EIP for agricultural productivity and sustainability	Flanders (BE)	Berlin-Brandenburg (DE)	Poland
	Czech Republic	Hungary	Mainland Portugal
	Brittany (FR)	Emilia-Romagna (IT)	Andalusia (ES)
	Midi-Pyrénées (FR)	Ireland	England (UK)
	Rhône-Alpes (FR)	Lithuania	Scotland (UK)
	Baden-Württemberg (DE)	Malta	Wales (UK)
	+16.2: support for pilot projects and for the development of new products, practices, processes and technologies	Austria	Greece
Bulgaria		Puglia (IT)	Basque Country (ES)
Croatia		Toscana (IT)	Catalonia (ES)
Cyprus		Veneto (IT)	Murcia (ES)
Mainland Finland		Slovakia	N. Ireland (UK)
Rhineland-Palatinate (DE)		Slovenia	
+16.4: support for horizontal and vertical cooperation among supply chain actors for the establishment and development of short supply chains and local markets and for promotion activities in a local context relating to the development of short supply chains and local markets		Bulgaria	Slovenia
	Croatia		
	Cyprus		
	Mainland Finland		
+16.5: support for joint action undertaken with a view to mitigating or adapting to climate change and for joint approaches to environmental projects and ongoing environmental practices	Romania		
	Slovakia		
+16.5: support for joint action undertaken with a view to mitigating or adapting to climate change and for joint approaches to environmental projects and ongoing environmental practices	Mainland Finland		
	Greece		
	Slovenia		
Other measures			
1: knowledge transfer and information actions	Bulgaria	Mainland Finland	Slovakia
	Croatia	Mainland Portugal	Wales (UK)

(Sub)-measure programmed for to implement the EIP	Country / region		
	Measure 16 (co-operation)		
2: advisory services, farm management and farm relief services	Bulgaria	Mainland Portugal	Wales (UK)
	Croatia	Slovakia	
4: investments in physical assets	Croatia	Slovakia	
	Mainland Finland	Sweden	

ii. Financial resources and envisaged spending

The table on the next pages below provides a description of the financial resources and envisaged spending on rural development, cooperation and the EIP across the different RDPs. In addition, it presents the cooperation budget as a proportion of the overall rural development budget and the EIP as a share of the cooperation budget in each country and region for which the information was made available to the evaluation team. The last two columns reflect the maximum funding support and (where available) the expected average funding per OG. It was not possible to calculate actual aggregated spending on the EIP as this information was not available for a number of RDPs due to the early stage of implementation of the initiative.

The table below reflect significant variations in the different budgetary envelopes analysed between countries and regions in each group of the typology, as well as in the EIP budget shares. The cooperation shares however are more balanced across the different RDPs.

The table is followed with sub-sections that present detailed analyses of financial resources and envisaged per type.

Table 7: Financial resources and envisaged spending on the EIP (note that n/a indicates where information was not available)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Country	Region	EU RD budget (EAFRD)	National RD budget	Additional national top-ups	Total RD budget (sum of columns C, D and E)	Cooperation budget (M16)	EIP budget (M16.1 and relevant sub-measures)	Cooperation budget (as a % of total RD budget (column F))	EIP budget (as a % of cooperation budget)	Maximum funding support per OG	Expected average funding per OG
In €million								In %		In € thousand	
Type 1											
Belgium	Flanders	384	288	247	919	7.1	0.36	0.8%	5.1%	30	30
Spain	Asturias	325	174	62	561	29.3	n/a	5.2%	n/a	60	n/a
UK	Wales	666	470	-	1,136	120.8	2.1	1.1%	1.7%	58.8	n/a
Type 2											
Finland	Mainland	2,300	3,200	2,600	8,100	227.2	3.0	2.8%	1.3%	n/a	300
France	Martinique	130	36	-	166	25.0	n/a	15.1%	n/a	n/a	n/a
France	Picardie	138	80	-	218	2.9	n/a	1.3%	n/a	n/a	118
Germany	Baden-W	709	635	479	1,823	32.7	10.9	1.8%	33.3%	n/a	300
Germany	Hessen	319	178	151	648	9.0	n/a	1.4%	n/a	n/a	245
Germany	Saxony	879	260	-	1,139	17.7	n/a	1.6%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Greece	-	4,700	1,200	-	5,900	205.4	80.0	3.5%	38.9%	150 -300	n/a
Hungary	-	3,400	740	-	4,140	96.9	11.0	0.2%	11.4%	150	n/a
Italy	Abruzzo	207	225	-	432	21.3	0.96	4.9%	4.5%	250	200
Spain	National	238	191	6	435	105.2	n/a	24.1%	n/a	200	n/a
Spain	Andalusia	1,900	540	-	2,440	55.6	19.4	2.3%	34.9%	300	2600
Spain	Galicia	890	270	-	1,160	55.2	n/a	4.8%	n/a	200	n/a
Spain	Murcia	219	129	-	348	9.6	1.0	2.8%	10.4%	200	n/a
Spain	La Rioja	70	70	62	202	6.2	2.1	3.1%	33.9%	200	n/a
UK	England	1,700	495	90	2,285	130.5	6.4	5.7%	4.9%	190	n/a
UK	N. Ireland	228	316	216	760	7.7	1.5	1.0%	19.5%	n/a	n/a

Evaluation study of the implementation of the EIP

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Country	Region	EU RD budget (EAFRD))	National RD budget	Additional national top-ups	Total RD budget (sum of columns C, D and E)	Cooperation budget (M16)	EIP budget (M16.1 and relevant sub-measures)	Cooperation budget (as a % of total RD budget (column F))	EIP budget (as a % of cooperation budget)	Maximum funding support per OG	Expected average funding per OG
Type 3											
France	Guyane	112	62	-	174	17.0	n/a	1.0%	n/a	n/a	1,500
France	Haute-Norm	103	69	-	172	7.2	n/a	4.2%	n/a	n/a	1,600
Germany	LS & BR	1,100	506	-	1,606	93.9	17.5	5.8%	18.6%	n/a	500
Germany	NR-Westp	618	557	8	1,183	37.7	6.6	3.2%	17.5%	1,000	n/a
Germany	Sch-Holst	420	203	247	870	25.6	n/a	2.9%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ireland	-	2,200	1,700	3.2	2,373	10.7	n/a	0.5%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Italy	Basilicata	411	268	-	679	32.5	3.0	4.8%	9.2%	400	n/a
Italy	Campania	1,100	726	-	1,826	92.3	12.7	5.1%	13.8%	1,000	500
Italy	Piedmont	471	622	-	1,093	50.3	5.6	4.6%	11.1%	875	500
Italy	Sardinia	628	680	-	1,308	46.8	6.5	3.6%	13.9%	800	700
Italy	Sicily	1,300	874	-	2,174	66.1	16.3	3.0%	24.7%	500	350
Italy	Veneto	511	674	-	1,185	39.8	8.5	3.4%	21.4%	500	400
Poland	-	8,700	4,900	-	13,600	94.9	24.6	0.7%	25.9%	2,800	1,100
Portugal	Mainland	3,500	700	-	4,200	99.6	n/a	2.4%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Romania	-	8,100	1,300	-	9,400	57.5	12.5	0.6%	21.7%	500	500
Sweden	-	1,600	2,300	-	3,900	218.9	47.0	5.6%	21.5%	n/a	320
UK	Scotland	844	489	12	1,345	49.7	12.8	3.7%	25.8%	n/a	594
Type 4											
Cyprus	-	132	111	-	243	4.6	1.6	1.9%	34.8%	100	50 – 100
France	Limousin	579	228	-	807	5.1	0.25	0.6%	4.9%	n/a	40
France	Réunion	386	150	-	536	101.8	n/a	19.0%	n/a	n/a	21.8
Italy	Liguria	135	179	-	314	16.9	2.2	5.4%	13.0%	100	90

Evaluation study of the implementation of the EIP

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Country	Region	EU RD budget (EAFRD))	National RD budget	Additional national top-ups	Total RD budget (sum of columns C, D and E)	Cooperation budget (M16)	EIP budget (M16.1 and relevant sub-measures)	Cooperation budget (as a % of total RD budget (column F))	EIP budget (as a % of cooperation budget)	Maximum funding support per OG	Expected average funding per OG
Spain	Basque C.	87	51	153	291	9.0	3.9	3.1%	43.3%	200	25
Slovakia	-	1,500	534	-	2,034	84.3	n/a	4.1%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Type 5											
Austria	-	3,900	3,800	111	7,711	175.9	20.0	2.3%	11.4%	No max set	200– 500
Croatia	-	2,000	300	-	2,300	15.8	9.7	0.7%	61.4%	200	n/a
France	Aquitaine	595	440	-	1,035	4.3	n/a	0.4%	n/a	n/a	150
France	Corsica	145	114	-	259	2.5	1.6	1.0%	64.0%	n/a	275
France	Lorraine	329	224	-	553	11.1	3.2	2.0%	28.9%	n/a	225
France	Midi-Pyr	1,300	625	-	1,925	25.9	6	1.3%	23.2%	n/a	300
France	P. de la Loire	458	316	-	774	7.4	n/a	1.0%	n/a	n/a	170
France	Rhone-Alpes	1,600	587	-	2,187	68.3	3.7	3.1%	5.4%	n/a	260
Germany	Bavaria	1,500	1,100	926	3,526	6.0	n/a	0.1%	n/a	250-500	n/a
Germany	Rhinel–Palat	300	221	140	661	12.8	n/a	1.9%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Italy	Emilia-Rom	513	677	-	1,180	90.5	n/a	7.7%	n/a	1,000	200
Italy	Lazio	336	444	-	780	35.8	n/a	4.6%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Italy	Lombardy	499	658	-	1,157	24.7	n/a	2.1%	n/a	200	150
Netherl	-	765	449	432	1,646	81.3	n/a	4.9%	n/a	250	n/a
Slovenia	-	838	262	-	1,100	36.1	25.6	3.3%	70.9%	250	n/a
Spain	Aragon	467	270	171	908	63.8	n/a	7.0%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Spain	Canary Isl	158	28	-	186	14.9	n/a	8.0%	n/a	200	160– 200
Spain	Cast y Leon	969	687	191	1,847	22.5	2.9	1.2%	12.9%	n/a	n/a
Spain	Catalonia	349	462	-	811	38.6	19.9	4.8%	51.6%	200	138.4
Spain	Extremadura	891	270	-	1,161	15.4	2.9	1.3%	18.8%	300	n/a

Evaluation study of the implementation of the EIP

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Country	Region	EU RD budget (EAFRD))	National RD budget	Additional national top-ups	Total RD budget (sum of columns C, D and E)	Cooperation budget (M16)	EIP budget (M16.1 and relevant sub-measures)	Cooperation budget (as a % of total RD budget (column F))	EIP budget (as a % of cooperation budget)	Maximum funding support per OG	Expected average funding per OG
Type 6											
Bulgaria	-	2,400	500	-	2,900	61.9	20.0	2.1%	32.3%	1,000	300-400
Czech Rep	-	2,300	769	-	3,069	224.7	9.7	7.3%	4.3%	1,900	750
France	Auvergne	1,200	467	-	1,667	11.6	n/a	0.7%	n/a	n/a	450
France	Basse Norm	309	165	-	474	11.4	1.6	2.4%	14.0%	n/a	320
France	Bourgogne	539	298	-	837	23.6	3.2	2.8%	13.6%	n/a	400
France	Bretagne	368	301	-	669	16.4	6	2.5%	36.6%	1,000-4,000	n/a
France	C-Val de L.	346	184	-	530	21.6	n/a	4.1%	n/a	n/a	640
France	Champ-Ard	202	117	-	319	17.3	3.7	5.4%	21.4%	No max set	1,900
France	Guadeloupe	174	32	-	206	17.9	n/a	8.7%	n/a	1,000	n/a
France	Ile-de-France	58	56	-	114	15.0	n/a	13.2%	n/a	n/a	625
France	Lang Rou	597	258	-	855	18.9	n/a	2.2%	n/a	n/a	365
France	Mayotte	60	20	-	80	11.6	n/a	14.5%	n/a	n/a	1,800
France	PACA	477	254	-	731	21.9	n/a	3.0%	n/a	n/a	388
France	Poit-Char.	398	238	-	636	5.4	n/a	0.8%	n/a	n/a	400
Germany	Berl & Brand	1,100	295	-	1,395	79.7	25.6	5.7%	32.1%	n/a	n/a
Italy	Fr-Ven-Giulia	128	184	-	312	20.5	n/a	6.6%	n/a	400	n/a
Italy	Marche	232	306	-	538	38.1	n/a	7.1%	n/a	500	n/a
Italy	Molise	101	109	-	210	16.3	2.9	7.8%	17.8%	1,000	n/a
Italy	Puglia	991	647	-	1,638	104.3	19.9	6.4%	19.1%	1,000	900
Italy	Tuscany	415	547	-	962	50.1	2.9	5.2%	5.8%	600	300
Italy	Umbria	378	499	-	877	97.8	2.6	11.2%	2.7%	525	600
Lithuania	-	1,600	300	-	1,900	44.3	n/a	2.3%	n/a	n/a	n/a

Type 1: small and open

Within type 1 RDPs, the following aspects merit special mention:

- Wales has the largest budget for rural development (€1.1bn), followed by Flanders, Belgium, (€961) and Asturias, Spain (€561).
- Budgets for both cooperation (M16) and EIP measures are also higher in Wales than in Flanders.
- Cooperation measures receive a proportionally higher budget in Austria than in Wales and Flanders.
- But the EIP measures represent a significantly higher proportion of the cooperation budget in Flanders (5.1%) than in Wales (1.7%). Unfortunately, data for Asturias in Spain was unavailable.
- The maximum funding support per OG is lowest in Flanders, and very similar in Asturias and Wales. Given the early stages of the process in many RDPs, expected average funding per OG was only available for Flanders, but had not yet been decided for Asturias and Wales

Type 2: medium and open

Within type 2 RDPs, the following aspects merit special mention:

- Finland has the largest budget for rural development (€8.1 billion), followed by Greece (€5.9 billion), Hungary (€4.1 billion), Andalusia (€2.4 billion), and England (€2.3 billion). At the other end, Martinique in France registers the lowest Rural Development budget (€ 166 million), followed by La Rioja in Spain (€ 202 million) and Picardie in France (€ 218 million).
- The budget for cooperation is highest in Finland (€ 227.2 million), but is also significant in Greece (€ 205.4 million), England (€ 130.5 million), the Spanish National RDP (€105.2 million) and Hungary (€ 96.9 million).
- However, when calculated as a proportion of the overall Rural Development budget, cooperation measures have a relatively large budgetary share in the Spanish National RDP (24.1%), followed by Martinique (15.1%) and England (5.7%), and relatively small shares in Hungary (0.2%), Northern Ireland (1%), the French region of Picardie (1.3%) and the German region of Hessen (1.4%).
- The EIP budget is highest in Greece (€80 million), but it is also important in Andalusia (€19.4 million), Hungary (€11 million) and Baden-Wurttemberg (€10.9 million).
- The EIP accounts for high proportions of the cooperation budget in Greece (38.9%), Andalusia (34.9%) and La Rioja in Spain (33.9%) and Baden-Wurttemberg in Germany (33.3%), while it is very low in Finland (1.3%) and England, UK (4.9%), two of the RDPs with the largest Rural Development and cooperation budgets in this group.
- The maximum funding support per OG is lowest in Hungary and for local and regional projects in Greece (€ 150,000 in each case), and is highest in Andalusia and for national projects in Greece (€ 300,000 in each case).

- Given the early stages of the process in many RDPs, expected average funding per OG was only available for Finland, Baden-Wurttemberg and Hessen in Germany, Abruzzo in Italy, Picardie in France and Andalusia in Spain.

Type 3: large and open

Within type 3 RDPs, the following aspects merit special mention:

- Poland has the largest budget for rural development (€13.6 billion), followed by Romania (€9.4 billion), Mainland Portugal (€ 4.2 billion), Sweden (€3.9 billion) and Ireland (€2.7 billion). At the other end, Haute-Normandie and Guyane in France register the lowest Rural Development budgets (€172 and €174 million respectively).
- The budget for cooperation is highest in Sweden (€ 218.9 million), but is also important in Mainland Portugal (€ 99.6 million), Poland (€ 94.9 million the German region of Lower Saxony and Bremen (€93.9 million) and Campania, in Italy (€ 92.3 million).
- When calculated as a proportion of the overall Rural Development budget, cooperation measures have relatively large budgetary shares in Lower Saxony and Bremen (5.8%), Sweden (5.6%) and Campania in Italy (5.1%), and relatively small shares in Ireland (0.5%), Romania (0.6%) and Poland (0.7%).
- The EIP budget is relatively large in Sweden (€ 47 million), Poland (€ 24.6 million) and Lower Saxony and Bremen (€ 17.5 million).
- The EIP accounts for slightly more than one quarter of the cooperation budget in Poland (25.9%) and in Scotland (25.8%), while it is also forms a large proportion in Sicily (24.7%). It is lowest in the Italian regions of Basilicata (9.2%) and Campania (13.8%).
- Since this type counts all 'open' RDPs with envisaged individual OG budgets of over €300,000, it is also worth pointing out the considerable variation in this area. Haute-Normandie (€1.6m) and Guyane in France (€1.5m), as well as Poland (€1.1m), all expect to support OGs with budgets of over €1m. Sardinia, Italy and Scotland, UK expect OGs of €700,000 and €594,000, respectively. While the rest of this group will support OGs of between €300,000 and €500,000.⁵³

Type 4: small and restrictive

Within type 4 RDPs, the following aspects merit special mention:

- Slovakia has the largest budget for rural development (€2 billion), followed by Limousin, France (€807 million). At the lower end, Cyprus registers the lowest Rural Development budget (€243 million), followed by the Basque Country, Spain (€291 million) and Liguria, Italy (€314 million).
- The budget for cooperation is highest in Réunion, France (€101.8 million) and Slovakia (€84.3 million), and lowest in Cyprus (€4.6 million) and in Limousin, France (€5.1 million).

⁵³ Unfortunately, precise data was unavailable for North Rhine-Westphalia and Schleswig-Holstein in Germany, Ireland, Basilicata, Italy and mainland Portugal.

- When calculated as a proportion of the overall Rural Development budget, the budgetary share for cooperation measures is highest in Réunion (19%), and lowest in Limousin (0.6%) and Cyprus (1.9%).
- The EIP budget is highest in the Basque Country (€3.9 million), and lowest in Limousin, France (€250,000). Looking at this as a proportion of the cooperation budget in each RDP, the share is highest in the Basque Country, where it represents 43.3% of the cooperation budget. It also represents a significant proportion of the cooperation budget in Cyprus (34.8%). At the other end, this proportion is lowest in the French region of Limousin (4.9%).
- The maximum funding support per OG is lowest in Cyprus and in the Italian region of Liguria and highest in the Basque Country in Spain. Expected average funding per OG is lowest in Réunion and the Basque Country and highest in Liguria and potentially in Cyprus.

Type 5: medium and restrictive

Within type 5 RDPs, the following aspects merit special mention:

- Austria has the largest budget (€7.7 billion) for rural development, followed by Bavaria, Germany (€3.5 billion), Croatia (€2.3 billion), Rhône-Alpes and Midi-Pyrénées in France (€2.2 and 1.9 billion respectively), and Castilla y Leon, Spain (€1.8 billion). At the lower end of the spectrum, Canary Islands, Spain has an overall budget of €186 million, followed by Corsica (€259 million) and Lorraine (€553 million), both in France.
- The budget for cooperation is highest in Austria (€175.9 million), but is also relatively large in the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna (€ 90.5 million) and in the Netherlands (€ 81.3 million). . The cooperation budget is relatively low in Corsica and Aquitaine in France (€2.5 and 4.3 million respectively), and in the German region of Bavaria (€6 million).
- When calculated as a proportion of the rural development budget, cooperation measures have a larger budgetary share in the Spanish region of Canary Islands (8%), followed closely by Emilia-Romagna (7.7%) and Aragon, in Spain (7%). On the other hand, cooperation measures are least significant in Bavaria (0.1%), Aquitaine (0.4%) and Croatia (0.7% each).
- The EIP budget is highest in Slovenia (€25.6 million), and is also relatively high in Austria (€20 million) and the Spanish region of Catalonia (€19.9 million). Looking at this as a proportion of the cooperation budget, EIP measures represent a significant share of the cooperation budget in Slovenia (70.9%), and are also high in the French region of Corsica (64%) and Croatia (61.4%). This figure is lowest in the French region of Rhône-Alpes (5.4%).
- The maximum funding support per OG is lowest in Croatia, the Spanish regions of Catalonia and Canary Islands, and in Lazio in Italy. On the other hand, maximum funding per OG is highest in the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna.
- Given the early stages of the process in many RDPs, expected average funding per OG was only available for a limited number of RDPs in this group. As per the evidence available, the expected average funding per OG is highest in Austria and Midi-Pyrénées and lowest in Catalonia, in Spain

Type 6: large and restrictive

Within type 6 RDPs, the following aspects merit special mention:

- The Czech Republic has the largest rural development budget (€3.1 billion), followed closely by Bulgaria (€2.9 billion). Lithuania (€1.9 billion) comes next in the list. At the lower end, the French regions of Mayotte and Ile-de-France have the lowest budgets (€80 million and €114 million respectively).
- The budget for cooperation is highest in the Czech Republic (€224.7 million), but is also relatively large in Puglia, Italy (€104.3 million), the Italian region of Umbria (€97.8 million), Berlin and Brandenburg in Germany (€79.7 million) and Bulgaria (€61.9 million). Conversely, the cooperation budget is lowest in the French regions of Poitou-Charentes (€5.4 million), Basse-Normandie (€ 11.4 million), Auvergne and Mayotte (€ 11.6 million each).
- When calculated as a proportion of the overall rural development budget, cooperation measures have a larger budgetary share in Mayotte (14.5 %), Ile-de-France (13.2%), and Umbria in Italy (11.2 %), and are least significant in Auvergne (0.7%) and Poitou-Charentes (0.8%) in France.
- The EIP budget is highest in Berlin and Brandenburg (€25.6 million), Bulgaria (€ 20 million) and Puglia in Italy (€ 19.9 million), and lowest in the French region of Basse-Normandie (€ 1.6 million). Looking at the EIP budget as a proportion of the cooperation budget in each RDP, the EIP represents more than one third of the cooperation budget in the French region of Bretagne (36.6%), and also has considerable proportions in Bulgaria (32.3%) and in Berlin and Brandenburg, Germany (32.1%). The EIP budget share as a proportion of the cooperation budget is lowest in Umbria, in Italy, (2.7%) and in the Czech Republic (4.3%).
- Since this type counts all 'restrictive' RDPs with envisaged individual OG budgets of over €300,000, it is also worth pointing out the considerable variation in this area. The expected average funding per OG also registers substantial variations between RDPs in this group, with Champagne-Ardennes in France recording the largest average funding (€1.9 million), and Tuscany, Bulgaria, Basse-Normandie and Bourgogne registering the lowest averages (€ 300,000 to 400,000).

iii. Arrangements regarding innovation brokerage services

The guidelines for programming EIP⁵⁴ foresee that "as part of innovation support services, "innovation brokering" could have an important role in discovering innovative ideas, facilitating the start-up of operational groups, notably by acting as a go-between who connects innovation actors (farmers, researchers, advisors, NGO's, etc.) in interactive innovation projects". An "innovation broker" aims to discover bottom-up initiatives, helps to refine innovative ideas, and provides support for finding partners and funding. A broker's main task is to help prepare a solid project proposal on which all actors of the operational group want to engage and agree that it will bring what they expect to be an innovative solution or opportunity. The thinking behind this is that if, through innovation brokering, a good project plan is developed, it will stand a better chance of passing the selection process for innovation projects with good results. Ideally, according to the guidelines, "innovation brokers should

⁵⁴ Guidelines on programming for innovation and the implementation of the EIP for agricultural productivity and sustainability - Programming period 2014-2020, Updated version December 2014

have a good connection to and a thorough understanding of the agricultural world as well as well-developed communication skills for interfacing and animating”.

The EAFRD Regulation offers the following possibilities for Managing Authorities to fund innovation brokering:

1. Innovation networking under the National Rural Network (Article 54(2)(d) and Article 54(3)(iii) and (iv));
2. Using the Cooperation measure (Article 35 (5) (b)) to cover the costs of an OG using an innovation broker to assist it in preparing a project proposal - entities who are already working together to form an OG (and who therefore have at least an outline / idea of a project, even if this will need further development) can engage the services of the innovation broker. The broker would charge them for its services;
3. Support for the use of advisory services with a particular focus on innovation, paid for directly by the Managing Authority (Article 15(1)(a));
4. Innovation brokerage could also be offered by a newly set up (branch of existing) advisory services which focus in particular on finding innovative ideas, connecting partners, and providing support for the preparation of project proposals. (Article 15(1)(b))

Distinct from the role of brokers, whose main task is to help prepare a solid project proposal, is the role of facilitator. Facilitators act as intermediaries in the operational group project. In accordance with the programming guidelines, facilitators play an important role “in view of getting and keeping the discussion on the farmers’ problems and bridging between the language of science and entrepreneurial practice which may have different objectives and time horizons”. In other words, facilitators should help ensure a group remains focused on the needs of primary producers. While the innovation broker who helped the group to build its project could also provide organisational support and become the facilitator of the project, this would not automatically be the case.

While the roles of innovation brokers and facilitators are different, during the fieldwork it emerged that, due to such factors as language and the newness of the EIP, there is considerable confusion about the distinction. Since much of the findings presented here are based feedback from stakeholders, it is possible that interviewees in some cases referred to innovation brokers when they meant facilitators, and vice versa.

Moreover, the Managing Authorities in most countries and regions also fund networking activities that could also contribute to the sharing of ideas, meeting of partners and establishment of OGs. The exact type of support being discussed was in some cases ambiguous to our interlocutors. To the extent possible we have tried to identify and correct such errors, but it is likely that some of them persist in our analysis. It should also be considered as a finding in itself that the various types of support on offer are sometimes poorly understood among key stakeholders.

Funding for brokering has been foreseen in the majority of RDPs for which we could obtain feedback. However, there are a number of RDPs that do not foresee this type of service, including Flanders in Belgium, Croatia, Hungary, England, Northern Ireland and Scotland in the UK, Ireland, Slovenia, The Netherlands, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Ile-de-France and Languedoc Roussillon in France, and a large number of regions in Italy. In addition, it is important to note that the authorities

In principle, there does not appear to be a direct relation between the typology types and the arrangements regarding innovation brokerage services. The sub-sections below explore in more detail the role that innovation brokers play in the RDPs that programme for the EIP. The analysis is structured following the six typology dimensions, while table 26 in Annex A contains a table summarising the basic features of brokering in each region.

Type 1: small and open

Innovation brokers are foreseen and considered as an important feature to support the delivery of the EIP in Wales, where there is already a pool of 27 highly experienced advisers who deliver support to farmers, and whose role will be expanded to act as innovation brokers for the EIP. It is envisaged that the innovation brokers will have a role in support the establishment of OGs, by helping to stimulate innovative ideas, connect innovation actors, help to refine ideas, and assist with the completion of application forms. In Wales, they can also be involved in the delivery of OGs (including a role in reporting), but they cannot be the lead applicant.

Given there is a well-established innovation infrastructure in the region of Flanders, it was decided that new innovation brokers funded under the EIP were not formally required, as actors within the existing infrastructure were capable of fulfilling this role themselves.

Type 2: medium and open

Innovation brokers are foreseen in the majority of RDPs in the second group, which combine medium average OG budgets and an open approach for selecting OGs. In particular, the innovation brokerage function is available in Finland, Greece, Hungary and the French, German and Spanish RDPs which fall under this group:

- In Finland, TEKES, the national Funding Agency for Innovation, provides advisory services and support to identify ideas that could be taken up in OGs.
- The two French RDPs in this group (Martinique and Picardie) envisage an innovation brokerage role for the start-up of Operational Groups.
- In Germany, innovation brokerage services have been selected and are available for use by projects. In Baden-Wurttemberg and Saxony, the brokerage role is played by the regional government, whereas in Hessen the brokerage will be provided by external advisors.
- Potential innovation brokers in Greece will emerge from within the National Rural Network. Innovation brokers will be expected to provide support through actions that may encourage the involvement of interested parties, to help identify appropriate partners, to support the take-up of bottom-up initiatives, and to assist with the elaboration of action plans for each OG.
- The five Spanish RDPs in this group also fund innovation brokers. In Murcia, the role is played by the Regional Agency of Agricultural Innovation. The Andalusian Institute of Agricultural Research and Training (IFAPA), a public research institute belonging to the Government of Andalusia, will be the main innovation broker in the region. Its role will be mainly technical and leads into a facilitating role to ensure projects' viability throughout their duration.

Within this group, innovation brokers are not envisaged in Abruzzo, Italy, Hungary and two RDPs in the UK (England and Northern Ireland):

- In England, the absence of innovation brokers is a deliberate feature of the programme, as the Managing Authority did not believe that funding for innovation brokers was the best use of scarce resources.

Type 3: large and open

Innovation brokers are foreseen in less than half of RDPs in the third group, which combine large average OG budgets and an open approach for selecting OGs. A service has been programmed in French and German RDPs, Poland and Sweden, and in the Italian region of Veneto:

- The French RDPs in this group (Guyane and Haute Normandie) envisage innovation brokerage services for the start-up of Operational Groups (though information was not available on who would provide this support).
- In Germany, innovation brokers have been selected and are available for use by projects. In Berlin-Brandenburg and in Schleswig - Holstein the support brokering services will be provided by external advisors. In North-Rhine Westphalia, a designated person within the regional government has been assigned to provide this support.
- The region of Veneto in Italy features several types of actors as innovation brokers, including consultants, agronomists, researchers and government representatives.
- Agricultural advisory and brokerage support for innovation in Poland is delivered by regional centres for agricultural advisory services acting on behalf of the Agricultural and Rural Innovation Network.
- Within the Swedish national innovation network, there will be an innovation support role (merging the functions of "innovation brokering" and facilitation services) that will provide support to applications, help to establish contacts between relevant actors and experts, investigate whether there is already a solution or partial solution to a proposed challenge and propose appropriate funding sources.

Innovation brokerage services are not envisaged in the majority of RDPs within this group, including Ireland, Romania, Scotland, the national RDP in Portugal and five Italian RDPs (Basilicata, Campania, Piedmont, Sardinia and Sicily):

- In Scotland, the innovation brokerage role has not been established, but the Scottish Government does not discard offering this support in this future.

Type 4: restrictive and small

The majority of RDPs in the fourth group, which combines small average OG budgets and a restrictive approach for selecting OGs, have planned for innovation brokerage services, including Cyprus, four French RDPs and the Basque Country in Spain:

- The four French RDPs in this group (Auvergne, Basse Normandie, Limousin and Réunion) envisage innovation brokerage services for the start-up of Operational Groups.
- The Basque Country in Spain has identified the public foundation HAZI to play the role of innovation broker.

Liguria, in Italy, and Slovakia stand out as the only RDPs in this group that have not envisaged an innovation brokerage function in their region / country.

Type 5: medium and restrictive

The innovation brokerage function has been introduced in more than half of the RDPs in the fifth group, which combines medium average OG budgets and a restrictive approach for selecting OGs, including in Austria, the French and Spanish RDPs:

- The innovation broker in Austria functions as a help centre and is responsible for providing support, assistance and ideas during the preparation of proposals for OGs.
- The six French RDPs in this group (Aquitaine, Corsica, Lorraine, Midi-Pyrénées, Pays de la Loire and Rhône-Alpes) envisage innovation brokerage services for the start-up of Operational Groups.
- In Spain, the regions of Canary Islands, Castilla y Leon, Catalonia and Extremadura include an innovation brokerage function in their RDPs. In Catalonia, the Institute for Research and Technology for Food and Agriculture (IRTA) is the designated innovation broker and has been involved in the design of most projects in progress.

Within this group, innovation brokerage services have not been programmed in Croatia, two German and three Italian RDPs, and are also unavailable in The Netherlands and Slovenia. In a few cases (Bavaria in Germany, and Slovenia) broader access to support services is offered through the pre-existing advisory services and the NRN, even though innovation brokers are formally not available.

Type 6: large and restrictive

The innovation brokerage function has been introduced in more than half of the RDPs in the sixth group, which combines large average OG budgets and a restrictive approach for selecting OGs, including in the Czech Republic, nine out of twelve French RDPs, Berlin and Brandenburg in Germany, and Marche and Molise in Italy:

- The innovation broker role in Czech Republic is provided by individual experts within the advisory system of the Czech Ministry of Agriculture.
- The majority of French RDPs in this group (Auvergne, Basse-Normandie, Bourgogne, Bretagne, Centre - Val de Loire, Champagne – Ardennes, Guadeloupe, Mayotte and PACA) envisage innovation brokerage services for the start-up of Operational Groups.

Within this group, innovation brokerage services have not been programmed in Bulgaria, the French RDPS of Ile-de-France, Languedoc-Roussillon and Poitou-Charentes, and Puglia, Tuscany and Umbria in Italy.

iv. The role of National / Regional Rural Networks

At the Member State / regional level, the **national / regional Rural Networks (NRNs/RRNs)** group organisations and administrations involved in rural development and support the implementation of the RDPs in all Member States since 2007-2013. NRNs/RRNs have four main areas of activities in relation to innovation: (i) raising awareness of and involvement in EIP AGRI of relevant stakeholders; (ii) facilitating the search for OG partners; (iii) networking for advisers and innovation support services; and (iv) collecting and disseminating examples of OG projects.

NRNs/RRNs are expected to collaborate with the EIP by collecting research needs from practice at national/regional level and feed this information back to the EU level network. In addition, the EIP network provides NRNs with an opportunity to disseminate innovative

projects happening at national/regional level across the EU and to advertise their events to a multi-country audience. Cooperation between the networks is therefore intended to be mutually beneficial, as the information that circulates in the EIP network may inspire national/regional stakeholders to set up new OGs, and the EIP is able to reach national/regional stakeholders through the NRNs, as well as collect ideas/needs at national/regional level that can then be translated into a new publication, focus group or event.

The table below shows the **status and expected key tasks in relation to innovation of the NRNs/RRNs** in a sample of 37 RDPs, including the 20 regions where we conducted in-depth study and 17 additional RDPs for where we undertook desk research. As shown in the table, the majority of RDPs examined envisage an active role for their NRNs/ RRNs in relation to innovation.⁵⁵ In some cases (Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and Sweden), the respective NRNs/RRNs have either not yet been set up or only recently officially launched, so those consulted by the evaluation considered that it was too early to judge the degree of success in supporting the set-up and implementation of the EIP. Only one RRN in France (Brittany) was reported not to have supported the EIP to date.

In terms of the expected key tasks in relation to innovation, a significant number of NRNs/RRNs in this group have focused (or are expected to focus) on overall awareness raising of the EIP, and on disseminating examples of OG projects. Fewer networks (though still more than half of the case study sample) intend to prioritise support for the search of OG partners, or networking for advisors and innovation support services. Given the early stage of implementation of the EIP, it is possible that there will be some reformulation of the key tasks of the NRNs/RRNs as more calls are launched and OGs are selected for funding.

Table 8: The role of national / regional Rural Networks in a sample of 37 RDPs

Country / region	Status	(Expected) key tasks in relation to innovation			
		Raising awareness of EIP	Facilitating the search of OG partners	Networking for advisers and innovation support services	Disseminating examples of OG projects
Austria	Active. Functions as an open communications platform	√	√	√	√
Belgium, Flanders	Active. Vlaams Ruraal Netwerk (VRN, Flemish Rural Network)	√			√
Bulgaria	Not yet set up for the period 2014-2020	√			√
Croatia	Active	√	√		√
Cyprus	Active	√	√	√	√
Czech Republic	Active	√		√	
Mainland Finland	Active	√	√	√	√
France, Brittany	RRN does not provide support for the EIP so far				
France, Midi-Pyrénées	Active RRN	√	√		√

⁵⁵ In addition, it is also worth pointing out that the Innovation Office EIP in Schleswig-Holstein, which is part of the RRN, has been especially active in supporting the EIP through information exchange and dissemination and the provision of support to OGs.

Country / region	Status	(Expected) key tasks in relation to innovation			
		Raising awareness of EIPI	Facilitating the search of OG partners	Networking for advisers and innovation support services	Disseminating examples of OG projects
France, Rhône-Alpes	Active RRN	√	√	√	√
Germany, Baden-Wuerttemberg	Active. The national rural support unit is the DVS "Deutsche Vernetzungsstelle Ländliche Räume" (German Rural Areas Network Unit).	√		√	√
Germany, Berlin-Brandenburg					
Germany, Rhineland-Palatinate					
Greece	Not yet activated	√	√	√	√
Ireland	Active	√	√	√	√
Italy, Puglia	NRN started its activities recently (in July 2015), so not yet fully active	√	√	√	√
Italy, Emilia-Romagna					
Italy, Toscana					
Italy, Veneto					
Lithuania	Not yet fully active	√	√	√	√
Malta	Active	√	√	√	√
Poland	Not yet fully active	√	√	√	√
Portugal (Mainland)	Active NRN	√	√	√	√
Romania	Active	√	√	√	√
Slovakia					
Slovenia	Not yet fully active in relation to the EIP. Role played by the Agricultural Advisory Service	√	√	√	√
Spain, Basque Country	Active RRN	√	√	√	
Spain, Catalonia	Active RRN	√	√	√	√
Spain, Andalusia	Active NRN, cooperating with regional stakeholders	√			√
Spain, Murcia	Active NRN	√			√
Sweden	Within the NRN there will be a special Innovation Network that will be the link between the wider European EIP Network and the Swedish OGs.	√	√	√	√
The Netherlands	Active	√	√	√	√
UK, England	Active NRN, though limited in scope				√
UK, Scotland	Active RRN, mostly focused on innovation brokerage role			√	
UK, N. Ireland	Active NRN	√	√	√	
UK, Wales	Active NRN	√	√		√

v. Priority themes and sectors

As mentioned above, the EIP is meant to respond to the needs of farming and forest management practice in a bottom-up fashion. For this reason, the Regulation is not prescriptive in terms of the themes and sectors eligible for support. However, Managing Authorities may choose to target themes and sectors according to established needs and prerogatives. This section examines the themes and sectors that RDPs are prioritising in practice, based on what we were able to glean from a review of RDP documentation. It should be noted that the approaches listed are not final, since Managing Authorities may become more or less flexible as needs evolve and they learn from their own and others' experiences.

Firstly, unsurprisingly the **three 'open' types tended to pursue a more flexible approach**. Beyond this, approaches did not follow the types but rather reflected diverse agricultural and forestry needs as well as the open, bottom-up spirit of the EIP. We identified three main approaches that the countries / regions are taking to prioritising:

- The most commonly used approach includes a **mix of open and fairly broad thematic priorities**, often reflected in the regional or national RDP strategy. The priorities are often open to interpretation with several RDPs explaining that applicants are free to suggest other themes.
- **Targeted priorities and sub-sectors are left open** in the hope that this will enable applicants to focus on their most pressing needs. In essence, applicants must only be compliant with Annex 1 to the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU and the aims of the EIP listed in Article 55 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013.
- A **more prescriptive approach** that makes applicants follow regionally pressing priorities to receive support. These include many of the German and French RDPs.

A general overview of the **main macro areas** (including forest, farming of food and farming of non-food) addressed by RDPs shows that farming of food is the most commonly targeted areas among regions and countries that make reference to specific sectors, including many regions in France, Italy and Germany and national RDPs in Finland, Greece, Romania, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Czech Republic.

Farming of non-food comes next in the list, selected as a priority area by a large number of regions in Germany and France, as well as national RDPs such as Finland, Greece, Austria, Romania, Bulgaria and Czech Republic among others.

Forestry is targeted as a priority in a more reduced number of RDPs, but it is particularly strong in many regions in France. It is also targeted in Finland, Greece, Austria and some RDPs in Germany, Italy and Spain.

Below follows a more detailed look at the approaches taken, in terms of the six typology types.

Of the four **Type 1 RDPs** (small and open) only the Spanish region of Andalusia specifically targets a sub-sector (olive production). Among the remaining RDPs, Asturias (ES) includes thematic priorities reflecting regional priorities (including topics related to farming of food and non-food) while Wales leaves it open to applicants to decide.

For **Type 2 RDPs** no trend emerges in terms of targeted priorities or sub-sectors. Of more than 20 RDPs two main sub-groups can be distinguished:

- RDPs that leave the thematic focus and sector open to applicants, such as Scotland, England, Rioja (ES), Galicia (ES), Abruzzo (IT), Picardie (FR) and Hungary.
- RDPs that apply a more prescriptive approach in terms of priorities and themes. For instance, most of the German Type 2 RDPs (Saxony-Anhalt, Saxony, Lower Saxony

and Bremen and Hesse) require that topics address particular needs and opportunities identified in the regions.

For **Type 3 RDPs** (large and open), a majority of the reviewed RDPs tend to have a completely open approach⁵⁶, the only requirement in essence being that themes must be compliant with the aims of EIP. A smaller group among Type 3 RDPs, consisting of only French and German regions, were somewhat less flexible in their approach⁵⁷. These RDPs require proposals to take into account specific regional priorities.

Among **type 4 RDPs** (small and restrictive) four out of seven had targeted priorities that reflected their regional priorities.⁵⁸ However, for Limousin (FR) this was decided on a call-by-call basis. Of the remaining three RDPs, Liguria (IT) had a more flexible approach, though horticulture was singled out as an especially important sector. For Cyprus and Slovakia no information was available on targeted priorities and sectors.

Among **Type 5 RDPs** (medium and restrictive), a majority have set broad priorities that are emphasised in the selection process.⁵⁹ However, some RDPs, such as Bavaria (DE), put further emphasis on rather narrow themes such as digitalisation and smart data in the agricultural sector. Several RDPs also mentioned that future more targeted thematic calls were planned which would be narrower in scope. The remaining RDPs, all Spanish, did not list specific targeting of priorities or sub-sectors and were all Spanish (Castilla y León, Catalonia and Extremadura).

Of the 22 RDPs classified as **Type 6** (large and restrictive), which have pre-defined themes for OGs, most only list generic priorities that OGs need to address to receive funding; this in fact leaves much room for bottom-up ideas.⁶⁰ There were only two exceptions to this. The French Region of Auvergne specifically targeted a smaller set of sub-sectors such as producers of grass-fed animals or suckler-cows. Burgundy (FR) also defined priorities that were sufficiently narrow as to explicitly exclude applications outside specific themes.

vi. Beneficiaries supported

RDPs in general have taken an open approach to the composition of OGs in terms of the types of actors eligible for funding and requirements for forming an OG. The ensuing paragraphs discuss this in more detail, based on the information available in RDPs. While the information is ambiguous in some cases, particularly whether certain types of actors are required or merely eligible for funding, it shows an emphasis on farmers in most cases. The analysis is structured in terms of the six typology types, while detailed summaries of the available information can be found in table 27 in Annex A

⁵⁶ Sweden, Portugal, Poland, Veneto (IT), Sicily (IT), Piemonte (IT), Campania (IT). Two RDPs (Ireland and Basilicata) had at the time of the review no information available regarding targeted priorities and sub-sectors.

⁵⁷ RDPs include France (Guyane and Haute-Normandie) Germany (North Rhine – Westphalia and Schleswig – Holstein)

⁵⁸ For Cyprus and Slovakia no information was available.

⁵⁹ These include Croatia, Aquitaine (FR), Lorraine (FR), Rhône-Alpes (FR), Bavaria (DE), Rhineland – Palatinate (DE), Emilia-Romagna (IT), Lazio (IT), Aragón (ES), Canarias (ES)

⁶⁰ These include: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Basse Normandie (FR), Champagne – Ardennes (FR), Guadeloupe (FR), Île de France (FR), Languedoc Roussillon (FR), Mayotte (FR), PACA (FR), Poitou-Charentes (FR), Berlin and Brandenburg, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia (IT), Puglia (IT) Two RDPs did not have information on targeted priorities (Lithuania and Marche (IT)).

Type 1: small and open

In terms of types of beneficiaries supported by the EIP in the countries and regions that fall within the first group, all three RDPs propose a broad approach, including farmers, researchers and other relevant stakeholder groups, namely breeders and agri-food industries in the case of Asturias in Spain, and foresters, advisors, businesses, environmental groups, consumer interest groups and other NGOs in the case of Wales.

Type 2: medium and open

In terms of types of beneficiaries supported by the EIP in the countries and regions that fall within the second group, the majority of RDPs propose a broad approach, including farmers, foresters, researchers, advisors, public bodies, associations and other relevant stakeholder groups. The figure of farmers is particularly relevant in almost all RDPs, except for Finland and Baden-Württemberg in Germany, where they are not mentioned. Saxony in Germany and Andalusia in Spain leave the definition of potential beneficiaries open, defining them as "*any physical or juridical person who submits an application*".

Type 3: large and open

In terms of types of beneficiaries supported by the EIP, the majority of RDPs in the countries and regions that fall within the third group propose a broad approach, including farmers, foresters, researchers, advisors, public bodies, associations and other relevant stakeholder groups. Most of the French, German and Italian regions in this group, and Poland, provide detailed indicative lists of the types of beneficiaries. On the other hand, Romania, Sweden, Scotland in the UK and Sicily in Italy leave the description relatively open and generic. The figure of farmers is particularly relevant in almost all RDPs, except for Sweden, where they are not mentioned.

Type 4: small and restrictive

All the countries and regions that fall within the fourth group provide broad and inclusive indications of the beneficiaries of the EIP, including farmers, foresters, researchers, advisors, public bodies, associations and other relevant stakeholder groups. The figure of farmers is relevant in almost all RDPs, except for Liguria in Italy, where they are not mentioned explicitly.

Type 5: medium and restrictive

The majority of RDPs for which information is available in the fifth group propose an inclusive approach to eligible beneficiaries for EIP OGs, including farmers, foresters, researchers, advisors, public bodies, associations and other relevant stakeholder groups. The figure of farmers is particularly relevant in almost all RDPs, except for Rhône-Alpes in France which proposes a more research-oriented approach. The majority of RDPs in this group provide detailed lists of the types of eligible beneficiaries. However, there are a number of countries / regions that leave the description relatively open and generic; these include Austria, Croatia, Aquitaine, Pays de la Loire and Rhône-Alpes in France, Bavaria and Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany and Emilia-Romagna in Italy.

Type 6: large and restrictive

In terms of types of beneficiaries supported by the EIP in the countries and regions that fall within the sixth group, the majority of RDPs propose a broad approach, including farmers, foresters, researchers, advisors, public bodies, associations and other relevant stakeholder groups. The figure of farmers is particularly relevant in almost all RDPs, except in the French regions of Ile-de-France and PACA, and some Italian RDPs (Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, Molise and Tuscany) where they are not mentioned explicitly. Except for Poitou-Charentes in France, which describes beneficiaries in a generic way, all RDPs in this group provide detailed lists of eligible beneficiaries for EIP OGs.

vii. Cross-border arrangements

As the EIP is funded mainly through the EAFRD Regulation, its primary focus is on rural development in the Member States and regions of the EU. However, the Member State / regional component of the EIP also encourages **cross-border collaboration** where it makes sense, particularly with regard to involving all relevant expertise in the set-up and running of OGs.

There are **several possibilities for cross-border OGs under rural development funding**, which are summarised below:

- A national rural development programme including support for operational groups at national level, additional to regional programmes including support for operational groups, can enable operational group projects with actors from different regions in one country. This may be useful for tackling certain cross-regional issues in regionalised countries and may help in reducing administrative burden between regional programmes within a MS.
- Art. 70 of Regulation 1303/2013 offers a possibility to use up to 5% of the EAFRD funding of a programme to finance operations implemented outside the rural development programme area provided that specific conditions are met. This may lead to an operational group formed inside a rural development programme area dedicating some funding to cooperation with actors outside the area.
- Another possibility may be when different programming regions more or less simultaneously decide to fund projects of operational groups in their own region on a topic that is common for several regions ("cross-border" themes). Each region will be funding the operational group projects in their own programming area but the costs of the regional groups will include some coordination actions with operational groups in other regions to coherently tackle a cross-border problem or opportunity.
- The full cooperation costs of the OG can be carried by one region, while the investment costs are carried by each region.
- All activities of the OG could be paid by one region except the activities of one partner. The activities of this partner would be paid for by the region the partner belongs to and are located in this region.

Our analysis shows that 30 MS / regions have opted at this stage to allow for cross-border approaches, while 39 MS / regions have not.⁶¹ **No clear trends emerged with regard to the typology types.** However, there appears to be more delineated patterns when assessed per country. As evidenced in the table below, the approach has not been implemented in the

⁶¹ Data was not available for 13 countries / regions.

majority of RDPs in France, but is foreseen in some regions in Germany and in most Italian RDPs. Managing Authorities in many regions in Spain and the UK are potentially interested in cross-border schemes in the future, but in the case of Spain have decided to implement national calls for cross-regional proposals.

Table 9: Cross-border arrangements

Cross-border arrangements	Country / region
Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cyprus - France (Rhône-Alpes) - Germany (Baden-W, Hessen, Saxony, LS & BR, NR-Westphalia, Schleswig-Holstein, Bavaria, Rhineland-Palatinate, Berlin & Brandenburg) - Greece - Italy (Abruzzo, Basilicata, Campania, Piedmont, Sardinia, Sicily, Veneto, Liguria, Emilia-Romagna, Lazio, Lombardy, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, Marche, Molise, Puglia) - Romania - Spain (Basque Country) - Sweden
No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Austria - Belgium (Flanders) - Bulgaria - Croatia - Czech Republic - France (Martinique, Picardie, Guyane, Haute-Normandie, Limousin, Réunion, Aquitaine, Corsica, Lorraine, Midi-Pyr, Pays de la Loire, Auvergne, Basse Normandie, Bourgogne, Bretagne, C-Val de L, Cham-Ardenne, Guadeloupe, Ile-de-France, Languedoc Roussillon, Mayotte, PACA, Poit-Ch) - Hungary - Italy (Tuscany, Umbria) - Spain (Andalusia, Catalonia, Canary Islands) - Poland - Portugal (Mainland) - UK (Scotland, Wales)
Data not available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finland (Mainland) - Ireland - Lithuania - Netherlands - Slovakia - Slovenia - Spain (National, Asturias, Galicia, Murcia, Aragon, Castilla y Leon, Extremadura)

viii. Outcomes of first calls and implementation status

First calls have been launched in 28 out of 85 RDPs for which we were able to obtain information. Application and selection processes are still on-going for many of the countries and regions, and the results are expected to be made public in autumn 2016. There are, however, a number of RDPs that have already selected the projects that will be funded and where work is already underway. Second calls are currently open in some of these countries and regions.

A slightly larger number of RDPs (30 in total) have not yet launched any calls for proposals. This includes many regions and countries that have already set up tentative dates for calls to be launched during the second half of 2016. However, there are a few cases where the EIP is still under development and dates have not yet been definitively set.

Information on outcomes of first calls and implementation status was not available for a number of RDPs. The sub-sections below present a detailed analysis of the outcomes of first calls and the implementation status per typology type, while detailed summaries of the available information can be found in table 28 in Annex A.

Type 1: small and open

The two RDPs in this group for which information is available (Flanders in Belgium and Wales in the UK) have not yet officially started any projects. Flanders launched a first call in February 2016 and received nineteen applications in response, with the prospect of awarding OG status to five applicants. The first OGs are expected to be launched between September and December 2016.

The Welsh Managing Authority in the UK opened its first application window in June 2016, so the process is still in its early stages.

Type 2: medium and open

First calls for proposals have been launched in five (out of sixteen) countries in regions in the second group, including in Mainland Finland, Hessen and Saxony in Germany, Hungary, and England in the UK. Projects have been selected in the two German RDPs but have not yet been launched. Selection was still on-going in Finland and in England at the time of submitting the report.

Many regions and countries in this group, including Greece, the National Spanish RDP, Andalusia, Murcia and La Rioja have confirmed plans to launch first calls for proposals in the second half of 2016. Northern Ireland in the UK was still working to develop the EIP in early 2016 and had not yet set up a date for the first call.

Type 3: large and open

First calls for proposals have been launched in seven (out of seventeen) countries and regions in the third group, including Guyane in France, three German RDPs, Mainland Portugal, Sweden and Scotland in the UK. Projects have been selected in in Scotland. The application and selection processes were still on-going in the other countries and regions.

On the other hand, Managing Authorities in Ireland, Poland and Romania were still working to develop the EIP implementation rules in their countries and expectations are that calls will be launched in late 2016. In a similar line, the Italian region of Piedmont has expressed plans to launch first calls in the second half of 2016. No information was available for the other five Italian RDPs in this group.

Type 4: small and restrictive

The Basque Country in Spain is the only region in this group that launched a first call for proposals. The call was designed as a trial experience with a low budget. Ten applications

were received, and four projects were selected for funding. A second call for proposals was under preparation and is planned to be launched with a larger budget.

First calls have not yet been launched in Cyprus, Limousin in France, Liguria in Italy and Slovakia. In most cases, Managing Authorities envisage that the processes will take place later in 2016, but there are a few cases where the launch date is either planned for 2017 or has not yet been set.

Type 5: medium and restrictive

Calls for proposals were launched in seven (out of 20) RDPs in the fifth group, including in Austria, three French regions, Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany, Emilia-Romagna in Italy and Catalonia in Spain. Projects have been selected in four regions, and are still on-going in three RDPs. A second call, currently on-going, has been launched in Rhône-Alpes following the results of the first call. Another interesting development in this group is the launch and implementation of a joint call between Pays de la Loire and Bretagne in France, which resulted in four projects selected that will be managed by the Managing Authorities in the two regions.

First calls have not yet been launched in Croatia, Aquitaine in France, Lazio and Lombardy in Italy, Slovenia and Canary Islands in Spain. With a few exceptions (e.g. Canary Islands), Managing Authorities in most of these countries / regions were still working to develop the EIP or had not yet set up a date for the first calls. The Slovenian case is interesting because, even though the Managing Authority is still working on the EIP's set-up, a preliminary call for expressions of interest was launched in 2014 to test the interest for themes, projects and responses from applicants.

Type 6: large and restrictive

First calls for proposals have been launched in nine (out of twenty-two) regions in the sixth group, including seven RDPs in France, Berlin and Brandenburg in Germany and Tuscany in Italy. Selection processes were still on-going in Auvergne, Basse-Normandie, Bourgogne, Guadeloupe and PACA at the time of writing the report. Projects have been selected in Bretagne (in a joint call with Pays de la Loire) and in Languedoc Roussillon.

On the other hand, Managing Authorities in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, the French regions of Centre-Val-de-Loire and Champagne-Ardennes and five out of six regions in Italy had not yet launched any calls. With a few exceptions, the majority of countries and regions that have not yet launched their processes expect to publish the first calls later in 2016.

2.6. Countries not implementing the EIP

Only Estonia and Luxembourg do not plan to implement the EIP,⁶² and the reasons for this decision vary according to very different national circumstances. The sub-sections below provide brief descriptions of the reasons why these two countries have not implemented the EIP.

⁶² Latvia, which had initially not programmed for the EIP, has amended its RDP to include the instrument in its programming.

Estonia

Estonia is a rural and relatively small country with over half its land area covered by forests and with only 21% in agricultural production. Whilst there are circa 19,000 farms (2013), only 7,000 of these are professional, commercial scale farms, and 1% of its farms account for 28% of total agricultural output. The rural economy has strengths from a diverse and culturally rich landscape, but suffers from poor productivity, skills and infrastructure deficiencies and a weak innovation culture, as well as low levels of investment in productivity growth.

Evidence in Estonia seems to suggest that the country faces more fundamental challenges in terms of addressing short term priorities which are focused on supporting investments in adding value to food products, addressing biodiversity challenges and basic rural infrastructure and connectivity issues such as improving broadband.

Estonia's RDP focuses on restructuring the dairy sector (following quota removal in 2015), the development of rural broadband services and the promotion of biodiversity measures. Innovation is not a strong theme in the RDP, but the programme does include a focus on training and information, advisory services and support for adding value, with circa 4,000 farms predicted to receive advice and training from 2014-2020 (over 20% of total farms). Whilst the Priority 1 in the RDP is Knowledge Transfer and Innovation, this has no specific funding, but will instead be delivered via the other five priorities in the RDP. Measure 16 cooperation is proposed under four priorities: competitiveness, food chain, ecosystems management and resource efficiency and climate with a total budget allocation of EUR 18.7 million (1.8% of the total budget).

Luxembourg

Luxembourg is geographically the smallest country in Europe, with 82% of its land area classified as rural. The pressure on land and the growth of urban sectors in Luxembourg is creating a strong drive towards a peri-urban agricultural model in the country. RDP funding is heavily weighted towards the environment and climate measures which together account for 60% of the RDP budget.

Luxembourg has an established innovation service, state funded, which covers all farms in the country and provides free advisory services including supporting innovation. This is supported by the Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology (LIST) which is the single national R&D centre focused on the needs of the agricultural sector. It has thus decided to use national funding to offer an adapted version of EIP focused on networking R&D projects and innovation.

Innovation in Luxembourg is integral to the RDP and seen as a cross-cutting priority which is aligned with investments in businesses, agro-environment agreements and Leader. It is also establishing a national innovation strategy, which as well as focusing on local needs, will link into the EIP at European level to ensure that messages from other counties informs action in Luxembourg. Despite not using OG funding, the country is encouraging the creation of OGs which will form part of their national delivery. They will also facilitate an annual call for projects to be funded by their own Ministry of Agriculture, Viticulture and Consumer Protection.

3. ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION STUDY QUESTIONS

This chapter presents the main findings of the evaluation in the form of answers to five evaluation questions, spread across four themes. Before going into the findings, it is worth briefly recalling the **methodology** followed and issues regarding the validity of the data. The evaluation drew on evidence from a range of sources, including **desk research** on RDPs and other relevant documentation, a series of **key informant interviews** and an **online survey** of relevant actors across the EU, to broaden the evidence base on certain issues (especially the work of the EIP network).

Most importantly, we conducted a series of **case studies** covering eleven Member States and 20 RDPs. The sample is presented over the next pages. It includes both national and regional programmes and draws on the typology developed previously to include examples of each relevant group. As part of the case studies, we undertook a systematic review of the main programming documents (expanding on the work already done for the descriptive part), and interviewed representatives of Managing Authorities, National and Regional Network Support Units, Operational Groups that have been or are in the process of being set up, and other key actors.

Table 10: Case study sample

Type	RDP	Rationale for selection
Type 1 (small & open)	Flanders, Belgium	Agriculture in Flanders is characterised by progressively increasing scale and modernisation, with its RDP focused among other things on innovation, resilience and sustainability. Its approach to the EIP focuses on departing from the status quo. This means putting farmers at the centre of the initiative and involving them with other actors. Flanders has programmed for uniformly-sized small projects (each EUR 30k) and expects to use a new Flemish EIP network to encourage various actors to play an innovation brokering role.
	Wales, UK	The Welsh RDP is focused on competitiveness, sustainability and tackling rural poverty. The EIP is meant to play a unique role in a well-developed AKIS, with the MA focused on coordination and innovation brokerage. While it will define priority areas for calls for proposals, OGs are free to propose other projects. Wales has made substantial progress so far but is having trouble linking OGs to H2020.
Type 2 (medium & open)	Greece	Greece features significant structural problems in the development and transfer of innovation and technology in agriculture, with limited experience in terms of implementing networking and business partnerships. However, it also features considerable innovation activity and envisages a large number of OGs to help address problems facing the agricultural sector. OGs are expected to participate in H2020 actions and upgrades to the NRN are meant to help it provide advisory services.
	England, UK	England is large and rural, with a well-developed innovation infrastructure that the EIP would need to complement. Its approach is based more than elsewhere on using the EIP to address market failures, notably regarding free-rider problems and issues preventing the spread of innovation through the agricultural sector. A bottom-up approach is planned, with no pre-defined topics. Implementation is relatively well advanced, with approval for the first round of projects expected by July 2016. Unlike many other British regions, innovation brokers are not used. Instead themed workshops have been run centrally to bring together relevant actors and steer them towards the Service Point and other existing actors.
	Andalusia, Spain	Andalusia covers 17.3% of the Spanish territory and is one of the most important agricultural regions, with olive trees cultivated on 25% of its agricultural land and agroforestry on another 21%. Fruits and vegetables are also important, representing 50% of the region's agri-food exports. In terms of EIP implementation, Andalusia has planned for 250 OGs, the most in Spain, and a commensurately large budget, at EUR 18.2m. Moreover, OGs have already been awarded funding in the olive sector. A single organisation has been designated for the provision of brokering services to help form and establish OGs.
Type 3 (large & open)	Brandenburg, Germany	This is one of the poorest regions in Germany, with an agricultural sector based on farming and forage cultivation. Is far advanced in its implementation of the EIP and is already preparing the second EIP application round, where they will modify some aspects of the application process in order to introduce some improvements. It also has an interesting feature in that potential OGs receive support from a private innovation support service provider during the application process. Moreover, compared to the other German regions, Brandenburg envisages a very high average budget per OG of EUR 1m.
	Puglia, Italy	Puglia is a highly rural, southern Italian region, with very small (average 4.7 ha), mostly family-run farms and a below-average level of economic development. Olive production accounts for over half of agricultural holdings, but wine, fruit and vegetables are also key sectors. Puglia has taken a keen interest in the EIP, with (proportionately) second-highest budget allocated to it among Italian RDPs, at 2%, and representatives of the Managing Authorities and other stakeholders participating actively in meetings at both national and EU levels. Moreover, Puglia had made substantial progress in implementing the EIP, with the first called planned for 2016.
	Poland	Poland is very rural, has the largest EAFRD budget and a relatively big share allocated to the EIP. Despite programming for very large projects, the MA has expressed an intention to pursue a farmer-led, open approach, focused on practical innovations that will be interesting to examine in practice.
	Sweden	Despite Sweden's well-developed innovation infrastructure, its small agricultural sector has taken little advantage of it. The EIP provides a mechanism to address this and has attracted high levels of initial enthusiasm. Innovation brokering is foreseen to help prepare projects applying a simplified cost system, with as much use as possible of the EIP network and disseminating results internationally. The MA also intends to monitor and evaluate implementation actively and refine its approach to the EIP over time.
	Scotland, UK	Scotland has a much smaller population than England, with one third of British land, of which 95% is rural. Farming is the dominant use of this land, and high greenhouse gas emissions from farming create a need for innovative practices. Ageing patters provide an opportunity (and need) to support generational renewal and the uptake of innovative practices. Implementation is underway, with four projects funded to date covering a wide range of subjects and project budgets.

Evaluation study of the implementation of the EIP

Type 4 (small & restrictive)	Veneto, Italy	Veneto has an important role in Italy's agri-food sector and has expressed a relatively high level of enthusiasm for the EIP. It pursues a 'package of measures' approach to supporting projects, while being one of the only Italian regions to have organised some meetings with potential OGs, allowing us to gauge to some extent how implementation is going in practice.
	Basque Country, Spain	The Basque Country is very mountainous region, has large proportions of its land devoted to farming (30%) and forestry (55%) and faces serious challenges related to land abandonment and low levels of rural employment. While the funding devoted to the EIP is relatively small (EUR 4m), it is already up and running, with four projects approved four funding during the first call and another call planned for April 2016. This region also provides an opportunity to examine how an approach using a single, appointed broker works in practice.
Type 5 (medium & restrictive)	Croatia	The EU's newest Member State, Croatia has no national strategy specific to research and innovation in the agricultural sector. The RDP points out that most farmers in Croatia rely on traditional methods to produce and process products. Collaboration between farmers, the food-processing sector and the research sector has historically been limited, resulted in a lack of awareness among primary producers of the potential for innovative projects. Through its implementation of EIP Agri, Croatia hopes that greater cooperation between farmers, businesses and the research community will result in a better exchange of information and knowledge and, ultimately improve the economic performance of the country's agricultural sector.
	Midi-Pyrénées, France	Almost all regional territory is in areas featuring national constraints to development (98%), including 38% in mountain areas. The EIP is mean to contribute to the "triple performance" of farm holdings: economic, environmental and social, through the establishment of 20 OGs. In this context, EIP is identified as a driver for "agro-ecology" in the food chain, in line with the Regional Strategy for Innovation. A first call for project was launched in 2015 (EUR 750k budget), focused on resilience to climatic evolution and price volatility, protein self-sufficiency, valorisation of "agro-ecology" practices, management of plant protection products in the air.
	Rhône-Alpes, France	More than the half of Rhône-Alpes surface area is mountainous (56.5%), and the EIP in Rhône-Alpes aims at addressing the low development of tools for research, experimentation and development of agriculture and food in the region. A first call for projects was launched in 2015 and focused on these topics, with a EUR 1m budget, and the RDP plans the establishment of 65 OGs overall. Interestingly, a new regional partnership has been set up on Research, Innovation and Development (RID) to support the EIP which gathers stakeholders involved in research, education and agricultural development.
	Rhineland Palatinate, Germany	This is one of the richer German regions and has an agricultural sector based on grapes and crops, with mainly small holdings. It is one of the few that defined themes that OGs must address within their projects. It has made considerable progress in implementing the EIP, with ten projects funded in January 2016.
	Emilia Romagna, Italy	This is an important agricultural region of Italy, contributing more than 42% of the total turnover from quality agricultural products. It has invested the most in sub-measures 16.1 and is also the only Italian region to have already launched calls for proposals.
	Catalonia, Spain	Catalonia is a highly forested and relatively wealthy region that has advanced heavily in its implementation of the EIP. The first call for proposals was opened in 2015 to applications for the establishment (planning and drafting of innovation projects) or operation (innovative pilot projects) of OGs. Innovation brokering is used, and projects have been selected across a variety of sectors, including fruits, food industries, forest, organic production, oil, wine, rice and beekeeping.
Type 6 (large & restrictive)	Bulgaria	Bulgaria has a large and under-developed agricultural sector. It has a need for technical modernisation and structural change that the EIP is meant to help address. However, the MA is pursuing a highly centralised approach in terms of project themes and budgets.
	Brittany, France	Brittany is one the main French regions for animal breeding and faces issues related to the environmental impacts of production and economic difficulties for farmers. Its programming for the EIP focuses on supporting self-sufficiency on supply chains (notably regarding proteins) and a first call for projects, launched in 2015 (jointly with neighbouring Pays-de-la-Loire), led to the selection of four projects, each involving a wide variety of stakeholders. An innovation broker was used for the first call to set up relevant partnerships and complementary projects, and a second call for projects is currently open and envisages the establishment of a further eight OGs.

3.1. *Validity and limitations*

All social research comes with certain limitations. For the present evaluation study, several issues should be kept in mind while reading the findings. The fact that the evaluation was commissioned at a time when **most RDPs were only just beginning to become operational**⁶³ had important implications for the approach. It meant that only a first series of Operational Groups had been set up by the time the evaluation team conducted its research. We therefore had to base the evaluation primarily on the approved RDPs, on underlying national legislation, on calls that had been (and, in some cases, still are to be) launched and on the likely effectiveness and efficiency of the activities that are expected to follow.

This situation is reflected in the evaluation steps (and the original Tender Specifications for the study published by DG AGRI). Considerable emphasis was placed on *describing and classifying* the implementation choices the EU Member States and (where relevant) regions have made in designing their respective RDPs, in terms of if, how and why they intend to make use of the opportunity to provide funding for Operational Groups (or not). Once this had been established, the focus shifted to what essentially amounts to an ***ex ante evaluation of the EIP implementation through RDPs***, coupled with an ***interim evaluation of the EIP network***.

Linked to the issue of timing, and the fact that the early stage of implementation meant that little in the way of concrete project results had materialised during the timeframe of the study, the evaluation relies to a significant extent on **what key stakeholders expect and / or see happen**. To some extent, the evaluation study was able to mitigate this reliance on subjective (if well informed) views by making an assessment of whether the outcomes which stakeholders said they expected are plausible based on the documentary evidence (mainly consisting of RDPs' plans for EIP implementation). For instance, an assessment of whether OGs are likely to be farmer-led was made both on the basis of the opinions of key stakeholders (Managing Authority officials, representatives of farmers' groups, advisory services) and on whether an objective assessment of selection criteria suggest groups led by primary producers are more likely to score highly compared to groups which are not led by farmers. The evaluation makes clear where it relies on different types of evidence and acknowledges where no relevant data could be found.

3.2. *Theme 1 – Internal coherence and relevance of EIP-related elements in RDPs*

3.2.1. *Introduction*

This chapter consists of an analysis of internal coherence and relevance of the EIP, as expressed in one evaluation question, itself made up of three sub-questions as follows.

EQ 1: To what extent are EIP-related elements included in the RDPs ...
1.1 - coherent with the needs assessment and strategic priorities of the programme area?
1.2 - relevant with regard to the needs of the farmers and forest managers in the programme area?
1.3 - coherent with related initiatives and elements of the first pillar of the CAP?

⁶³ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-development-2014-2020/country-files/common/rdp-approved_en.pdf

Interpretation of key terms

Needs assessment in the RDPs (based on Annex I of implementing regulation (EU) No 808/2014): refers to evidence from the SWOT analysis, for each Union priority for rural development and focus area and the three cross-cutting objectives (environment, climate change mitigation and adaptation, innovation).

Strategic priorities in the RDPs: priorities defined in the RDPs based on the SWOT analysis and the needs assessment.

Relevance: defined in the Better Regulation Guidelines as 'the relationship between the needs and problems in society and the objectives of an intervention'. In our case it refers to the extent to which the EIP elements included in the RDPs address the needs of the farmers and forest managers in the programme area.

Coherence: defined in the Better Regulation Guidelines as 'how well or not different actions work together', with 'internal coherence' relating to 'how the various internal components of an EU intervention operate together to achieve its objectives, while 'external coherence' (covered under theme 4 of this report) refers to the relationship with other interventions. For this question, we will mainly look at 'internal coherence', particularly related initiatives and elements of the first pillar of the CAP.

General approach to the question

This question will consider the extent to which the EIP-related elements of the RDPs are:

1. coherent with the needs assessment and strategic priorities
2. relevant to the needs of farmers and forest managers
3. coherent with related initiatives and elements of the first Pillar of the CAP

This question is tackled in three sequential steps. First, we will conduct an analysis of the problems that the EIP is intended to address in each country / region, and an assessment of the extent to which the EIP-related elements of the RDPs have considered and are coherent with the rural development priorities of the RDPs. We understand that the consistency between the needs assessment in each country / region and the strategic priorities has already been analysed ex-ante, but we will review the analyses and confirm the extent to which the EIP related elements in the RDPs continue to be relevant

The second step focuses on whether the needs assessments of the RDPs and the EIP-related elements and its implementation rules have considered and adequately respond to the specific needs of stakeholders, in particular those of farmers and forest managers.

Last, the coherence between EIP related elements of the RDPs with related initiatives and elements of the first pillar of the CAP is analysed. If we identify discrepancies between the different elements (stakeholders' needs, needs assessment, strategic priorities and EIP related elements), we will explore to what extent these are 'justified' in given RDPs.

Particular focus is given to the measures implemented to address problems relating to the lack of innovation in the different areas and sectors. This analysis will consider the assessment of the consultation strategy implemented for the elaboration of the RDPs and the global coherence of the RDPs, with a particular focus on innovation issues.

The analysis and answer to EQ1 are **based on data collected in Task 2**, in particular the case studies, which entail an in-depth analysis of EIP-related elements and RDPs in specific programming areas. These case studies cover 20 RPDs in 11 MS.

The **coherence** with the first Pillar of the CAP and related elements are analysed through the implementation of direct payments and particularly implementation of the VCS scheme, greening payments and relations with producers' organisations (PO).

However, while Member States face a large range of choices regarding implementation of the first Pillar, there is no specific tool related to innovation. Moreover, **most first Pillar**

choices are taken at national level, even in Member States that address rural development at the regional level.

The analysis considers several elements of the implementation of the first Pillar, namely:

- **Implementation of greening**, i.e. ecological focus areas and equivalent practices;
- **Specific geographical areas**, through the implementation of regional basic payment schemes and the areas of natural constraints;
- **Specific holdings or sectors**, i.e. implementation of voluntary coupled scheme.
- The **Farm Advisory System (FAS)**, which is defined in the Horizontal CAP Regulation covering both pillar I and II (Reg. (EU) No 1306/2013 on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy).

The objective is to identify the specific issues, sectors and territories covered by the implementation choices of the first Pillar of the CAP, and to understand to what extent the EIP deals with these issues, sectors and territories.

Judgement criteria and indicators

The table below summarises the three sub-questions addressed in this chapter, in addition to listing the judgement criteria and indicators used to frame the analysis.

Table 11: Judgement criteria and indicators for Evaluation Question 1

Theme 1: Internal coherence and relevance		
EQ 1: To what extent are EIP related elements included in the RDPs ...	Judgement criteria	Indicators
1.1 - coherent with the needs assessment and strategic priorities of the programme area?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which the EIP approach to fostering innovation is consistent with the needs identified in the respective RDPs • Extent to which Member State / regional plans for EIP implementation are aligned with and flow logically from the strategic priorities identified in the respective RDPs • Extent to which Member State / regional plans for EIP implementation contradict any of the needs or priorities identified in the respective RDPs 	<p>Documentary evidence to confirm RDPs' plans for EIP implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have identified a need to facilitate more innovation and/or strengthen innovation systems • Prioritise "interactive" approaches to generating and disseminating innovative solutions • Reflect themes for innovation identified in the SWOT analysis
1.2 - relevant with regard to the needs of the farmers and forest managers in the programme area?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which farmers and forest managers in the respective Member State / regions have a need for different / new approaches to fostering innovation • Extent to which Member State / regional plans for EIP implementation reflect the main needs of farmers and forest managers with 	<p>Views of key informants (innovation actors such as farmers and forest managers themselves, advisors, researchers) confirm that farmers and forest managers in the respective MS / regions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want more support for innovation (e.g. financial support, access to expert knowledge and advice, access to facilities, help to

Theme 1: Internal coherence and relevance		
EQ 1: To what extent are EIP related elements included in the RDPs ...	Judgement criteria	Indicators
	regard to the generation, dissemination and/or implementation of innovative solutions	find partners, help to attract investors) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree that the EIP approach (collaboration on practical questions between innovation actors such as farmers, advisors, researchers etc.) could speed up innovation • Agree that the specific themes, priorities and mechanisms to be used in their regions will allow them to address their most pressing needs (in terms of themes / approaches) • Agree that the interactive EIP approach is additional to support already available to stakeholders
1.3 - coherent with related initiatives and elements of the first Pillar of the CAP?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which Member State / regional plans for EIP implementation are complementary to elements of the first Pillar of the CAP and to the FAS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary evidence and stakeholders' views indicate that national/ regional plans for EIP implementation complement or support related initiatives and elements of the first Pillar of the CAP, specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greening, particularly through issues addressed through EIP OGs - CMO' producer organisations - Targeting of specific sectors, in particular through Voluntary Coupled Support - Farm Advisory System (FAS)

3.2.2. Coherence of the EIP with the needs assessment and strategic priorities of the RDPs

Documentary evidence on RDPs' plans for EIP implementation have identified a need to facilitate more innovation and / or strengthen innovation systems; prioritise 'interactive' approaches to generating and disseminating innovative solutions; and reflect themes for innovation identified in the SWOT analysis

In order to help assess the coherence of the concrete implementation of the EIP and the RDPs, the table below presents, for each case study, the needs assessment and strategic priorities of the RDPs on the one hand, and progress to date on the other hand, based on the information known in the MS/regions where the first EIP projects are in progress.

Coherence is then analysed by comparing the RDPs with implementation of the EIP in practice.

We can distinguish three level of coherence:

- 1) coherence in the documentary part (i.e. the text of the respective RDPs) between the needs assessment and the strategic priorities identified;
- 2) coherence between the documentary part and the content of the first projects launched in the MS/regions where projects are already in progress;
- 3) coherence between the documentary part and the related elements of the implementation of the EIP as provided by the MA where projects have not started yet.

Regarding the **documentary part**, the available evidence points to a high level of coherence. More specifically:

- In most cases, there is clear coherence between the needs assessment identified in the RDPs and the strategic priorities of the RDPs: the main needs listed often refer to the need to improve **the competitiveness of the agricultural sector** and the need to **strengthen collaboration between production and research**.
- Furthermore, in 7 case studies out of 20 (Puglia, Sweden, Poland, Veneto, Rhineland-Palatinate, Emilia-Romagna, Catalonia) the needs assessment clearly refers to the **"bottom-up" approach** (or a central role given to the farmers and forest managers), which is the main gap that the EIP implementation is expected to address.

Looking at these issues through the **prism of the typology** and individual RDPs brings out two key findings. First, though there is some variation in the level of documentary coherence, the EIP is able to fill a gap, at least in conceptual terms, in widely diverse contexts. The second point is that it does this in substantially different ways. The table below demonstrates this by disaggregating documentary coherence in terms of the six types used to frame the analysis and pointing out limitations in coherence where applicable.

In the vast majority of cases (16 of 20 RDPs) there was a high level of documentary coherence. In four cases we found only intermediate levels of coherence, due to the fact that they defined priorities that did not cover the full list of identified needs. Importantly, we did not find any examples of incoherence. A detailed summary of the evidence is contained in table 29 in Annex A.

Coherence in the MS/regions where the first projects are already in progress:

This leads to a discussion of coherence in practice. The coherence of the needs and priorities defined in the RDPs with the concrete application of the EIP can be assessed only in the MS/regions where the first projects are already in progress. In such cases, it is possible to assess the level of coherence or contradiction between the needs or priorities identified in the RDPs and the themes and implementation details of the projects (i.e. EIP OGs) that have been launched.

The key findings on coherence based on the first projects can be summarised as follows (with detailed findings contained in table 30 in Annex A):

- In six cases (Midi-Pyrenees, Basque Country, Brittany, Rhône-Alpes, Rhineland-Palatinate and Catalonia), the first projects approved are clearly in line with the needs identified in the national/regional RDPs.
- In one case (Scotland), the needs identified in the RDP are defined in a more general and cross-cutting way and do not specifically focus on themes / topics to be addressed. For that reason, it is difficult to assess the coherence in specific terms. Nevertheless, as of now, there is nothing to suggest that the OGs in progress are not consistent with or contradict stated needs in any way.

Coherence in the MS / regions where EIP projects have not started yet

In many countries and regions projects have not been awarded yet. In such cases it is impossible to ascertain whether contradictions are likely between the RDPs and the content of the first projects. The 'bottom-up' approach envisaged in many countries and regions renders attempts to estimate coherence especially fraught, since key project parameters are not defined in advance but instead rely on the perceived needs of farmers and other actors.

These caveats aside, the fieldwork did provide some relevant information based on the implementation plans of MAs. Most importantly, the evidence so far suggests a high level of coherence can be expected in these RDPs once projects are launched (notwithstanding inconclusive findings in two Member States). More specifically:

- In the RDPs where the first projects have not started yet, the design of the EIP in their MS/region and the expected implementation of the EIP (as described by the MA) is in line with the needs identified in the RDPs in nine cases out of 13.
- In England and Poland, we have stated that the level of coherence was intermediate:
 - In England, the MA has some doubts about whether it will be able to reach relevant potential beneficiaries, including those farmers who are currently less keen on innovation, and thereby fully implement the envisaged bottom-up approach.
 - In Poland, the MA is concerned about the design of the EIP regarding the potential advantage given to larger organisations. It is seen as potentially too restrictive.
- In the two last cases (Croatia and Bulgaria), it is not possible to give a clear answer regarding the level of coherence or contradiction with the available information from the MA and the RDPs at this stage.

Detailed summaries of coherence, based on needs assessments in the RDPs and expectations of Managing Authorities based on interviews, can be found in table 31 in Annex A.

Main findings in sub-question 1.1

There is a **high level of coherence between the identified needs and the EIP concept**. At a general level, all RDPs' needs assessments and strategic priorities included elements related to strengthening innovation, which suggests coherence with the overall objectives of the EIP. In some cases, the need for a "bottom-up" approach is clearly stated, which is fully in line with the design of the EIP. Several RDPs also refer to the need for coordination and "interactive" approaches, which is also fully coherent with the design of the EIP.

In the MS/regions where some projects are already in progress, a **high level of coherence can be confirmed for almost all regions**. In these regions, the RDPs identified relatively specific needs (in terms of sectors or themes), which are in turn reflected in the OGs that have been launched to date. In Scotland, the needs are defined in more general terms, making it difficult to assess the coherence in specific terms. Nevertheless, as of now, there is nothing to suggest that the OGs in progress are not consistent or contradict stated needs in any way.

In the MS/regions where projects have not started yet, we based our preliminary assessment of the coherence between the needs and priorities defined in the RDPs and the planned EIP activities on our interpretation of perceptions and views of Managing Authorities. In nine of 13 countries / regions, Managing Authorities presented compelling cases to explain how the EIP would correspond to the needs expressed in their respective RDPs. Significant doubts were only evident in two cases. In England, Managing Authorities expressed some doubts about whether they had the right systems and tools in place to

reach a wide range of farmers (including less innovative ones), while in Poland the EIP seems designed to favour relatively large actors. Both of these can be taken as somewhat inconsistent with the principle of fostering bottom-up innovation. Not enough progress had occurred to make a robust assessment of likely coherence in practice in Croatia and Bulgaria.

While the findings did not indicate a strong relationship with the typology categories, it is important to note that in some cases RDPs supporting larger projects were associated with concerns that projects would not be sufficiently bottom up or farmer led. This was less of an issue with smaller projects, but interviewees worried that the administrative burden would be potentially dissuasive compared to the amount of funding on offer.

3.2.3. Relevance of the EIP with regard to the needs of farmers and forest managers

Views of key informants (including farmers and forest managers, advisors and researchers) in the Member States and regions regarding the desire for support for innovation, agreement with the EIP approach, agreement with specificities of EIP implementation choices and additionality of the EIP

The second sub-question is about the extent to which EIP related elements in the RDPs are relevant with regard to the needs of the farmers and forest managers in the programme area. The annex to theme one includes a table with detailed feedback from stakeholders. For the purposes of the analysis, we can split stakeholder views about relevance into two main groups.

On the one hand, most stakeholders interviewed expressed a high degree of enthusiasm for the EIP's ability to address farmers' / forest managers' needs, feeling it would fulfil a gap for practical, farmer-led projects. A smaller group of stakeholders was more sceptical. While not doubting the EIP concept as such, they voiced concerns about a range of conceptual and administrative issues that might undermine its potential relevance. Since opinions differed both within and across countries and regions, it is not possible to ascertain whether the perceived relevance is greater in some places than in others. Similarly, there did not appear to be noteworthy differences according to the typology of RDPs (i.e. whether requirements are more or less restrictively defined, and whether they envisage larger or smaller OGs). A detailed overview of the views gathered can be found in table 32 in Annex A.

To **summarise views on relevance**, the EIP concept was acknowledged by most stakeholders as a useful new tool that has the potential to provide new opportunities for farmers to foster new connections between research and farming, to support the practical adaptation of research results and to seek tailor-made solutions to respond to their technical problems in practice.

However, there are some concerns around the design of the EIP that might limit the ability to implement it effectively. These focus mainly on the expected administrative burden, particularly the fear that long delays for payment could discourage farmers and smaller entities, particularly those not accustomed to project funding, from applying to set up an OG. This may be an issue if MAs do not consider the relatively small human and financial resources of such entities. The lack of such resources could make it hard for them to participate if the administrative burden is too high or if it takes too long to reimburse OG participants for costs incurred.

Some stakeholders were also reserving judgement about the relevance of the EIP until the MA in their respective country / region sets out key parameters for implementation. For example, many interviewees stressed the importance of access to relevant information: OG results can only be widely applied if sufficient multipliers are involved in the projects and if the results are disseminated effectively. However, a number of interviewees did not

know much about how the results of OGs would be shared. While they appreciated that abstracts for each OG would be collected and made freely available, interviewees did not feel this alone would be sufficient to ensure that the results are widely shared and understood. In some cases, MAs indicated that, in their opinion, major dissemination efforts would be needed to ensure the high *theoretical* relevance of the EIP translates into *practical* usefulness. Their doubts stemmed from not yet knowing how such efforts would be organised and by whom.

Main findings in sub-question 1.2

The EIP concept is acknowledged by the vast majority of stakeholders as a useful new tool that will provide new opportunities for farmers to develop connections between research and farming, to access concrete and tailor-made practical results. Stakeholders' statements reflect that the EIP has the potential to open new doors: it allows for the possibility to support practical work on very specific questions. Moreover, in many regions the bottom-up approach is a new concept that adds substantially to what existed previously. While stakeholders in such regions felt scientific research was often done in a top-down, theoretical way, the EIP could help bridge the gap between research and practice by ensuring it responds to specific practical questions and challenges facing farmers.

However, stakeholders voiced some concerns around the extent to which the EIP would be able to deliver on its potential. This is due to the expected administrative burden and fears that a long delay for payment could discourage farmers and SMEs from applying to establish an OG. In some cases, the implementation are still unfinished or unclear to farmers and other innovation actors. There were also feelings of uncertainty around dissemination, since in many cases concrete plans were not yet known. While stakeholders appreciated that abstracts for each OG would be freely available, MAs in particular considered wide efforts necessary to ensure the *theoretical* relevance of the EIP translates into *practical* usefulness.

3.2.4. Coherence of the EIP with the first pillar of the CAP

Documentary evidence on coherence of the EIP with elements of the first pillar of the CAP

The purpose of this sub-question is to examine the links between the EIP and first pillar of the CAP. While supporting first pillar objectives is not one of the aims of the EIP, there are several ways that they could in principle be coherent. To assess this, we rely on cross analysis between i) the areas to which the projects led by the selected OGs are dedicated and ii) the first pillar choices made by Member States at national and regional level, in particular concerning greening, producer organisations (POs), and voluntary coupled support (VCS). For each RDP the EIP objectives were drafted following DG AGRI and national guidance.⁶⁴ This means at a general level that the EIP would be aligned with the objectives of the first pillar of the CAP. But it does not follow from this that EIP projects would support first pillar objectives in concrete terms. To assess this comprehensively, features of selected projects would need to be compared with first pillar CAP choices listed above. However, the EIP is only in the beginning stages of implementation, with OG projects having only been selected in seven of the 20 RDPs in which we carried out case studies. The evidence presented here is thus limited, with the findings subject to change depending on the projects selected over the coming months and years.

⁶⁴The drafting of the RDP followed DG AGRI and national guidance that helps regional/national drafters to deliver coherent assessments.

Producer organisations

In most RDPs, POs do not have a defined role vis-à-vis the EIP. Instead, most the local implementation rules refer to 'farmers' or 'groups of farmer' and to 'companies'. POs are clearly mentioned in only one of the cases covered (Brittany). Even here they appear to have the same priority as numerous other organisations, and rather as cooperative enterprises than as Commission-approved POs. Leading from this, we have not identified any examples of concrete links between OGs and the actions of POs.

Greening

The objective of the greening direct payment is to enhance the environmental performance of the CAP through payments for practices beneficial for the environment and climate change. Such practices are:

- crop diversification, most notably with accompanying benefits for soil quality;
- maintenance of permanent grassland with its associated environmental benefits, in particular carbon sequestration, and protection of environmentally sensitive grassland; and
- ecological focus area (EFA) covering 5% of arable area, in particular with a view to safeguarding and improving biodiversity on farms.

The first two items are implemented in all Member States:

- In all Member States (except Malta) and particularly in those covered by case studies, a significant proportion of land is subject to crops diversification; and
- In relation to the maintenance of permanent grassland, Member States can choose whether to manage it on a regional or national level

The third item – EFA – can be managed through different methods. A recent report by the Commission⁶⁵ states that the share of the main EFA choices made are: nitrogen-fixing crops (39.4% of the weighted area), land lying fallow (38%), catch crops (15%), landscape features (4.8%) and buffer strips (less than 2%).

Considering the short list of projects that have been selected for EIP funding to date in the case studies, five out of 55 appear to be related to one of the greening methods: four of these are on protein crops, in Rhône-Alpes, Brittany, Midi-Pyrenees, and Rhineland-Palatinate, and the other one is on grassland management in Rhineland-Palatinate.

Connections with the sectors covered by Voluntary Coupled Support

VCS is an instrument that allows Member States to support specific sectors, especially in areas with natural constraints such as mountains or moors. All Member States where EIP projects have already been selected have chosen to support some specific sectors, except Germany. Of the RDPs which have yet to select EIP OGs, some e.g. England in the UK, have also chosen not to use the VCS approach.

Coherence between these choices and the EIP programme can be analysed by cross referencing the sectors with VCS and the subjects of the granted EIP projects. This analysis shows the following (note that detailed data on the VCS choices and selected granted projects can be found in table 33 in Annex A):

⁶⁵ Commission staff working document SWD(2016) 218 final: Review of greening after one year

- Except in Germany, which has not introduced VCS, there is in all cases a match between one of the sectors involved in VCS and those being supported through EIP OGs
- But, to date, convergence between VCS and the EIP appears to occur more by coincidence than by design; there are no OGs in most of the sectors supported by VCS, while most of the OGs do not deal with the sectors supported by VCS. In the future some projects related to sector supported by VCS may be implemented, but this does not appear to be a priority at this stage for most MAs based on the feedback gathered.
- Protein crops in France are an exception; a national plan for protein crops was drawn up in 2014, including coordination between actors (farmers, seed producers, grain collectors, feed factories, and research institute). This example illustrates how OGs may fit national needs and objectives with regard to specific sectors.

The EIP and the Farm Advisory System (FAS)

To explore the question of the coherence of the EIP with the Farm Advisory System (FAS), it is worth reminding ourselves of the legal basis for both: EIP is grounded in recitals 41 to 45 and articles 53, 54, 55, 56 and 57 of the Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 on support for rural development by the EAFRD. The FAS is defined through recitals 10 to 12 and articles 12 to 15 (Title III) of the Horizontal CAP Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 on the financing, management and monitoring of the CAP. While initially focused mainly on cross compliance, the role of the FAS has been extended to include promoting innovation. According to Regulation (EU) 1306/2013, the FAS is primarily intended to “help beneficiaries to become more aware of the relationship between agricultural practices and management of farms on the one hand, and standards relating to the environment, climate change, good agricultural condition of land, food safety, public health, animal health, plant health and animal welfare on the other”.

High convergence can be seen through several paragraphs:

- Recital 42 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 (about the EIP) indicates that “In order to contribute to the achievement of the aims of the EIP for agricultural productivity and sustainability a EIP network should be set up in order to network operational groups, **advisory services** and researchers involved in the implementation of actions targeting innovation in agriculture. It should be financed as part of technical assistance at Union level”. Moreover, recital 45 of the same Regulation indicates that **OGs bring together “NGO advisors” with other OG actors**.
- Recital 11 of the Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 indicates that the “farm advisory system [...] should also cover [...] measures at farm level provided for in rural development programmes aiming at farm modernisation, competitiveness, building, sectoral integration, **innovation**, market orientation and promotion of entrepreneurship.

Thus, the recitals of the two regulations are coherent: - on the one hand - FAS advisory services are expected to be involved in the EIP as intermediate actors between farmers and researchers or other actors, and - on the other hand - one of the roles dedicated to FASs is to enhance measures at farm level aiming at innovation.

- Article 55-1-d of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 indicates that “the EIP [...] shall build bridges between cutting-edge research knowledge and technology and farmers, forest managers, rural communities, businesses, NGOs and **advisory services**. Article 56-1 indicates that operational groups “shall be set up by interested actors such as farmers, researchers, **advisors** and businesses involved in the agriculture and food sector, who are relevant for achieving the objectives of the EIP.

- Article 12 of the Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 is very explicit and indicates that **'FAS shall cover at least [...] (c) measures at farm level provided for in rural development programmes for farm modernisation, competitiveness building, sectoral integration, innovation and market orientation, as well as for the promotion of entrepreneurship'**, thus obliging all official FAS bodies to promote and support the EIP and its OGs.

This shows a high level of coherence: the EIP rules target advisory services to be active partners in OGs and on the other hand FAS rules imply that the advisory bodies under FAS coordination should cover the measures provided at farm level for farm innovation.

Thus we can conclude that the Regulations defining roles of EIP and FAS are highly coherent in principle.

It is however notable that the FAS covers only a limited part of the total number of advisors which could be involved to promote innovation and be part of OGs.

Views of stakeholders and key informants in the Member States and regions

In spite of some of the overlaps in terms the themes of EIP OGs and first pillar measures outlined previously, the case studies provided no indication that these were the result of a conscious effort to target such themes with EIP OGs. Nonetheless, the examples provided above confirm that there is broad coherence between the EIP and the aspects of the first pillar that were examined, and that OGs have the potential of reinforcing these (whether inadvertently or on purpose).

The fieldwork also shows that FAS have played a role the EIP implementation in a number of regions: in Wales, the FAS, part of 'farming connect programme' will give advisory support the OGs; in Midi-Pyrénées, Rhône-Alpes and Brittany, bodies which are part of the regional FAS (such as Chambers of Agriculture of Cooperative federation) are also part of some OGs, in Cataluña and Basque Country cooperatives are part of FAS and EIP OGs.

In Croatia, the agricultural "Advisory Service" is a public institution specialised in providing advice to primary producers and other economic entities in agriculture, rural development, fisheries, and forest management through a central office in Zagreb and subsidiaries across the country. The core business of the Advisory Service is the transmission of knowledge and information in agriculture, and linking stakeholders in the development of rural areas. As such, it is planned that the Advisory Service will play a key role in the implementation of the EIP in Croatia. The Advisory Service will set up a help-desk for EIP to answer questions from potential OG member and help to identify partners from business and the research community. It also expects to participate in most OGs in Croatia, playing a facilitating role (section 4 of the Croatia case study).

The FAS also looks likely to be involved in EIP implementation in Bulgaria and Greece, where details remain to be defined. The FAS does not seem likely to play a big role in Germany or the UK, where the advisory system is relying increasingly on private entities. The evidence was inconclusive in other case study countries and regions.

Main findings in sub-question 1.3

Links with the first pillar of CAP are not an explicit aim of the EIP. Nonetheless, were such coherence to exist, it may enable the pillars to mutually reinforce each other.

Through the documentary analysis, related to the choices of the Member States in relation to the first pillar of the CAP and through the comparison with the themes of the selected EIP projects reported by seven regions in which case studies were conducted, one can note that there are already a few EIP projects related to technical subjects linked with first pillar initiatives, namely greening or the delivery of VCS. However, we did not find any evidence of a purposeful involvement of Producer Organisations in EIP projects.

Regarding the relationship between the Farm Advisory System (FAS) and the EIP, the evaluation found that:

- The FAS objective related to fostering innovation coincides with the objectives of the EIP, which also aims to involve the advisory services in the EIP projects.
- In some cases, FAS bodies are involved in OGs, and/or advisory services have a recognised role in terms of supporting EIP implementation by providing services such as innovation brokerage.
- However, it appears that the role the national FAS is not always well defined or understood; they can play a role in the EIP, but the extent to which this has been thought through and clearly spelled out varies.
- Overall, the evaluation did not find much evidence of conscious efforts to ensure coordination between 1st pillar instruments and EIP design, the examples of OGs that address themes that are prioritised under the first pillar suggest that coherence exists in principle.

3.2.5. Evaluation judgement

Under this theme, the evaluation assessed the extent to which the EIP-related elements included in RDPs are (1) coherent with the needs assessment and strategic priorities of the programme area; (2) relevant with regard to the needs of the farmers and forest managers in the programme area; and (3) coherent with related initiatives and elements of the first pillar of the CAP.

These questions relate closely to the **pre-existing rationale** for the EIP described in the intervention logic, most importantly that farmers, forest managers, researchers, advisers, businesses and NGOs face barriers and disincentives to working together, in part due to a lack of mechanisms for collaboration. They also link to assumptions about the alignment between projects funded through the EIP and the strategic needs and priorities of individual RDPs, as well as complementarity with the first pillar of the CAP.

The evaluation found that in the way it has been designed and implemented so far, the **EIP is both internally coherent and relevant** to the needs of farmers and forest managers. More specifically, the EIP concept clearly fits the needs assessments and strategic priorities of the RDPs, which place a major focus on innovation in the agriculture and forestry sectors. Innovation actors, most importantly farmers and forest managers, emphasised the lack of mechanisms for linking research and practice, which was consistent across countries / regions despite big differences in the agricultural context and innovation infrastructure. Moreover, the flexibility of the EIP allows it to be shaped to widely disparate circumstances. While concrete links with the first pillar of the CAP appear relatively unexplored at this initial stage, there is an underlying coherence which allows for the possibility of greater synergies as the EIP gains traction and implementation proceeds.

The evaluation also uncovered **limitations and concerns** in each of these areas, but in many cases these relate to the early stage of EIP implementation and related vagueness in documentation and / or uncertainty among stakeholders about what the EIP will look like in practice.

It is also important to point out that the findings did not indicate any strong relationships within or between the six categories of RDP identified for the typology⁶⁶ in terms of their approach to the EIP. In general terms, this implies that the **EIP is a flexible tool that can be adapted** to divergent circumstances and policy contexts.

⁶⁶ As explained in section 2.5.2, the analysis of the EIP implementation in RDPs was in part structured through a typology that categorised all RDPs for which information was available into six types according to two key programming dimensions – namely size of OGs and level of prescriptiveness of the parameters.

3.3. Theme 2 – Effectiveness and efficiency of EIP implementation through RDPs

3.3.1. Introduction

This chapter consists of an analysis of effectiveness and efficiency of the EIP's implementation by RDPs, as expressed in one evaluation question, itself made up of two sub-questions as follows.

EQ 2: To what extent are the implementation choices made in the RDPs by the MSs intended to contribute to enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainability:

2.1 - effective or providing the necessary preconditions for enabling effectiveness?

2.2 - efficient in terms of limiting the administrative burden?

Interpretation of key terms

Implementation choices made in RDPs: OGs, themes, procedures, monitoring, selection and eligibility criteria

Effectiveness: defined in the Better Regulation Guidelines as "how successful EU action has been in achieving or progressing towards objectives". For the purposes of this question, we looked at the conditions enabling effectiveness in terms of potential changes in the behaviour of innovation actors.

Preconditions: regulatory, administrative and / or financial provisions that facilitate the implementation of the EIP and progress towards its objectives.

Efficiency: defined in the Better Regulation Guidelines as "the relationship between the resources used by an intervention and the changes generated by it (either positive or negative)". Given the early stage of implementation of the EIP, we consider efficiency mostly in terms of the administrative burden on potential beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

Administrative burden: costs to stakeholders for complying with the obligations resulting from imposed regulations and procedures (for applying to funding, implementing an initiative, monitoring its outcomes, etc.) whether resulting from EU-level policy choices or national-level choices with regard to implementation.

General approach to the question

This question considers the (potential) effectiveness of the EIP and procedures for its implementation in the different RDPs, as well as the efficiency of the system for innovation actors. We looked at:

- Coherence of the EIP compared to stakeholders' needs (see EQ 1);
- Intervention logic, in terms of the perceived appropriateness of measures and sub-measures to implement the EIP, and the relationship between them;
- Implementation choices for the different measures, in terms of the appropriateness of selection and eligibility criteria, procedures for calls for and selection of Operational Groups, promotion and level of support provided, and the ability to select the highest quality projects without putting up barriers to participation for relevant stakeholders;
- Support for the development of the EIP, notably through EU and national networks (see EQs 3 and 4); and
- Budget allocation for EIP implementation, in terms of its appropriateness for the number and plans of the Operational Groups.

The EIP is mainly implemented through the Co-operation measure 16 (Article 35); other articles may also contribute to its implementation, for instance Article 15 (1) (a and b) for financing “innovation brokers” and Article 17(3) (investments in physical assets), which provides increased aid for operations supported in the framework of the EIP. Thus, we analyse the **general strategic approach** of the EIP and its implementation choices, based on:

- First results from RDP implementation (where RDPs have been implemented)
- Interviews with EIP stakeholders and beneficiaries and RDP managing authorities
- Case studies in 11 Member States (20 RDPs) including a review of RDP programming documents and ex-ante evaluations and interviews with key stakeholders
- The online survey with EIP stakeholders

Administrative burden is an important issue for all EU policies and the implementation of a new initiative such as the EIP needs to be aligned with the efforts led by the EU on this front. Administrative burden has been assessed based on the data collected during the case studies and is related to:

- Procedures for applying for funding
- Selection and eligibility criteria
- Provisions and processes for the inclusion of multipliers in projects and for disseminating results
- Costs to participating in the EIP network and EIP Focus Groups
- Procedures for calls for proposals (for instance, implementation of permanent open calls or not with “block procedures”)
- Programming procedures
- Monitoring and control measures

Judgment criteria and indicators

To answer this evaluation question, we developed a series of six indicators as set out in the table below.

Table 12: Judgement criteria and indicators for Evaluation Question 2

Theme 2: Effectiveness and efficiency of the EIP implementation through RDPs		
EQ 2: To what extent are the implementation choices made in the RDPs by the MSs intended to contribute to enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainability:		
	Judgement criteria	Indicators
2.1 - effective or providing the necessary preconditions for enabling effectiveness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which EIP (OG) funding is attractive to (potential) applicants • Evidence that OGs address practical issues / challenges that lend themselves to the generation of the desired (practical, tangible and widely applicable) results • Evidence that OGs involve innovation actors who are (together) able to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary evidence to confirm OG funding is attractive to potential applicants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nr of applications received - Amount of funding applied for vs. amount available - Attendance at networking events - Selection criteria attract a sufficiently

Theme 2: Effectiveness and efficiency of the EIP implementation through RDPs		
EQ 2: To what extent are the implementation choices made in the RDPs by the MSs intended to contribute to enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainability:		
	Judgement criteria	Indicators
	<p>address the practical issues / challenges to generate the desired (practical, tangible and widely applicable) results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which OGs are complementary with other innovation actions taken at national /regional level • Extent to which support services are appropriate to the needs of stakeholders in the country / region(s) • Extent to which support services are accessible to stakeholders 	<p>broad range of potential innovation actors (technological, non-tech, social, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexibility in terms of themes - Support provided by MAs - Support provided by farm advisory services - Role played by innovation brokers in the start-up of OGs - Role played by facilitators during operation of OGs • Documentary evidence and stakeholders' views to confirm: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The EIP adds value above and beyond existing forms of support for innovation actors - Strategies for dissemination, follow-up and / or implementation of OG results are plausible - Envisaged cross-border approaches are plausible - Strength of links at programmatic or OG level to other innovation actions at MS/regional level
<p>2.2 -efficient in terms of limiting the administrative burden?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which policy choices for EIP (decisions made at EU-level over which Managing Authorities are unable to exercise discretion e.g. the obligation for MAs to check OGs fulfil their obligation to have a plan describing their project and expected results) impact on the administrative burden for managing authorities and applicants / beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views of key informants to confirm that EIP funding is attractive and proportionate with the time needed for administration (i.e. time/resources allocated to application, selection, contracting and reporting procedures) taking into account standard procedures for other rural development measures and sources of funding for innovation

Theme 2: Effectiveness and efficiency of the EIP implementation through RDPs		
EQ 2: To what extent are the implementation choices made in the RDPs by the MSs intended to contribute to enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainability:		
	Judgement criteria	Indicators
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which RDP choices for EIP implementation (decisions made by managing authorities within the limits of their discretion e.g. relating to the subject, focus and composition of OGs) impact on the administrative burden for managing authorities and applicants / beneficiaries Extent to which RDP choices for EIP implementation relating to processes and procedures (e.g. systems put in place or planned for applying for and reporting on support) impact on the administrative burden for managing authorities and applicants / beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentary evidence (mainly documentation obtained for case studies) and stakeholder views to confirm administrative burden for managing authorities and applicants/ beneficiaries resulting from EU-level policy choices Documentary evidence (mainly documentation obtained for case studies) and stakeholder views to confirm administrative burden for managing authorities and applicants/ beneficiaries resulting from RDP implementation Views of key informants to confirm that there are ways to improve processes and procedures for implementing the EIP

3.3.2. Effectiveness and provision of the necessary preconditions for enabling effectiveness

Evidence to confirm OG funding is attractive to potential applicants and support provided is adequate to their needs

- Number of applications received and level of support applied for**

At the time of writing, **information on the number of applications received is limited.** Most RDPs have not yet launched their calls for applications. Among those who had, there was no relationship between the amount of funding available and the number of applications received. There was very limited data on the amount of funding applied for as a proportion of the amount available. RDPs which had already launched their first calls reported most applicants applied for the maximum level of support available and those which are yet to launch expect the same. There was no observable difference between the different types of RDPs and the number of applications received.

In terms of networking events to bring together potential OG members, RDPs across the types had made some effort to promote the EIP via workshops and presentations (e.g. Flanders, Type 1), seminars and face-to-face meetings with potential applicants (e.g. Veneto, Type 3). Some RDPs held dedicated events for EIP (e.g. Rhineland-Palatinate, Type 5) whereas others chose to promote the programme via existing events on other topics (Emilia-Romagna, Type 5). Although a few RDPs had not organised any events to promote the EIP (e.g. Puglia, Type 6), most, including those RDPs which had not yet launched their first calls, have already run some stakeholder consultation to raise awareness of and collect feedback to help shape the initiative (e.g. Croatia, Type 5, where

stakeholders were also invited to EIP-related events in neighbouring Slovenia, Type 5). By setting **selection criteria relating to the composition of OGs**, managing authorities can seek to attract a broad range of innovation actors. All RDPs insist that the composition of the group needs **to cover the knowledge and qualifications required for the implementation of the plan** but some go further, to specify that both primary producers and researchers must be involved (e.g. Flanders, Type 1).

In terms of the size of groups, **many RDPs have opted not to build on the minimum requirements from the regulation** to stipulate that groups must have at least two members, without imposing further restrictions (e.g. Sweden, Type 3). Others have set a higher threshold of three members as the minimum to constitute a group (e.g. Croatia, Type 5). In the Croatian case, this insistence on three members reflects the fact that OGs will need to be established as associations under Croatian law, a status which is only available to groups made up of at least three entities. The evaluation found **little evidence of upper limits on the number of members in Operational Groups**. Where such a restriction has been imposed (e.g. Andalusia, Type 2, which limits groups to five members) this has been included in an attempt to limit the administrative burden associated with running the group. Andalusia is also an interesting case because it has chosen to restrict the participation of actors involved to a maximum of four OGs e.g. a university department wishing to participate in EIP will be limited to joining a maximum of four operational groups. This choice could affect the participation of larger research institutions in the programme as a whole but may help to ensure a higher number of innovation actors become involved with EIP in that region.

Some RDPs sought to prioritise OGs where different levels of the supply chain are represented (e.g. Brittany, Type 6, and Emilia-Romagna, Type 5). In Emilia-Romagna, the more stages of the supply chain present among the members of a prospective OG, the higher the score for the OG in the selection procedure. This recognises the importance of innovation along different stages of the value chain. An interesting example in this regard comes from the Basque Country (Type 4). In that RDP, the budget allocates approximately 30% of funding for researchers and universities and 70% for cooperatives, farmers and producers' associations. This indicates the strong involvement that the agricultural sector is expected to play in EIP projects in that region.

Setting selection criteria so that OGs involve at least one primary producer is likely to help ensure EIP OGs will address practical problems faced by farmers and forest managers. But **the evaluation found little evidence of selection criteria seeking to ensure OGs are led by primary producers**. Several managing authorities and other stakeholders argued that primary producers may not be adequately experienced to lead projects, insisting that primary producers should be the lead applicants would risk jeopardising the successful outcome of projects. This argumentation indicates that some Managing Authorities do not sufficiently understand that the lead-applicant should not necessarily be the partner taking care of the administrative issues. This situation may also have a counterproductive effect to attract innovation as it will direct funding to the "usual suspects" i.e. actors which already have links with the Managing Authority. Most managing authorities do not stipulate what type of actor should lead projects, preferring to rely on the fact the group as a whole should contain the requisite skills and experience to ensure it can reach a successful outcome.

The task of ensuring OGs contain the requisite skills and experience falls to Managing Authorities. Applications for Operational Groups are evaluated by expert panels set up by Managing Authorities to score and rank them based on pre-established criteria. Alongside an assessment of the relevance of the proposal and the combined technical expertise of group members, **managing authorities also plan to prioritise previous experience of applied research in the sector and experience of handling EU funds**. In Croatia (Type 5), for example, the planned selection criteria favour groups where at least one member can demonstrate "operational experience in a research project in the relevant sector which results are applicable in practice" and "experience as the leading partner on cooperation projects funded by the EU or national funds". The latter requirement, while

sensible from the perspective of ensuring group members are well versed in the reporting procedures for EU funds, seems likely to restrict the number of actors who can score highly to those who are already familiar with EU and national funding streams.

Another issue which has occupied the minds of some Managing Authorities when setting selection criteria is that of **how to involve young farmers and researchers at an early stage of their careers in the EIP**. Berlin-Brandenburg's (Type 6) selection criteria place an emphasis on the inclusion of young farmers and/ or young researchers in operational groups. Stakeholders in other regions worried that in the absence of such provisions, young producers and SMEs with limited financial resources would find it difficult to get involved in OGs (particularly, given the fact that funding will only be supplied after a substantial amount of work has been carried out).

The flexibility shown by Managing Authorities in defining themes for OGs is one of the two dimensions which defines the typology for this evaluation. Where Managing Authorities set selection criteria which could be defined as 'restrictive' this involved singling out sectors of particular importance to agriculture in the region (e.g. the olive sector in Andalusia, Type 2) or themes which were important to the country's RDP priorities (e.g. prioritisation of environmental topics in Sweden, Type 3). The **dichotomy between open and restrictive themes is somewhat artificial**, given the evidence, from Managing Authorities interviewed as part of the evaluation case studies, suggests prospective Operational Groups will be allowed to propose projects which fall outside the prescribed themes.

Setting themes allows MAs to indicate where they would like to see OGs acting. And early indications suggest that prospective OGs will take their cue from these themes. This is not surprising, given that in many cases the themes were set following an initial call for expressions of interest: some Managing Authorities invited innovation actors to submit concept notes outlining project ideas and then defined their selection criteria to reflect these ideas. While this approach could be considered useful to ensure the EIP reflects the needs of innovation actors in the RDP, it risks the programme being skewed towards the interests of those stakeholders who are best informed and already engaged with the managing authority.

- **Support and role of innovation brokers and facilitators**

The guidelines for programming EIP⁶⁷ foresee that "as part of innovation support services, "innovation brokering" could have an important role in discovering innovative ideas, facilitating the start-up of operational groups, notably by acting as a go-between who connects innovation actors (farmers, researchers, advisors, NGO's, etc.) in interactive innovation projects". An "innovation broker" aims to discover bottom-up initiatives, helps to refine innovative ideas, and provides support for finding partners and funding. A broker's main task is to help prepare a solid project proposal on which all actors of the operational group want to engage and agree that it will bring what they expect to be an innovative solution or opportunity. The thinking behind this is that if, through innovation brokering, a good project plan is developed, it will stand a better chance of passing the selection process for innovation projects with good results. Ideally, according to the guidelines, "innovation brokers should have a good connection to and a thorough understanding of the agricultural world as well as well-developed communication skills for interfacing and animating".

The Regulation⁶⁸ offers the following possibilities for Managing Authorities to fund innovation brokering:

⁶⁷ Guidelines on programming for innovation and the implementation of the EIP for agricultural productivity and sustainability - Programming period 2014-2020, Updated version December 2014

⁶⁸ Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

1. Innovation networking under the National Rural Network (Article 54(2)(d) and Article 54(3)(iii) and (iv));
2. Using the Cooperation measure (Article 35 (5) (b)) to cover the costs of an OG using an innovation broker to assist it in preparing a project proposal - entities who are already working together to form an OG (and who therefore have at least an outline / idea of a project, even if this will need further development) can engage the services of the innovation broker. The broker would charge them for its services;
3. Support for the use of advisory services with a particular focus on innovation, paid for directly by the Managing Authority (Article 15(1)(a));
4. Innovation brokerage could also be offered by a newly set up (branch of existing) advisory services which focus in particular on finding innovative ideas, connecting partners, and providing support for the preparation of project proposals. (Article 15(1)(b))

Distinct from the role of brokers, whose main task is to help prepare a solid project proposal, is the role of facilitator. Facilitators act as intermediaries in the operational group project. In accordance with the programming guidelines, facilitators play an important role "in view of getting and keeping the discussion on the farmers' problems and bridging between the language of science and entrepreneurial practice which may have different objectives and time horizons". In other words, facilitators should help ensure a group remains focussed on the needs of primary producers. While the innovation broker who helped the group to build its project could also provide organisational support and become the facilitator of the project, this would not automatically be the case.

The evaluation considered the level of support provided by different actors (including the managing authority, farm advisory service, innovation brokers and facilitators) during the preparatory phase (consultation) and in the set-up and operation of OGs.

In some RDPs, such as Greece (Type 2) and Bulgaria (Type 6) the institutional framework for support had not yet been established. Where systems were in place, **the evaluation observed a variety of approaches towards the support provided.** The Managing Authority plays an active role and provides direct support in some RDPs (e.g. Veneto) whereas in others, the MA will retain overall responsibility for the programme's design and implementation (e.g. Sweden, Type 3) while technical and administrative support for OGs would be provided through a contractor (e.g. Wales, Type 1) or the farm advisory service (as is planned in Croatia, Type 5). In terms of preparatory work, Managing Authorities, often working closely with the relevant NRN, have been involved in promotional activities to raise awareness of EIP alongside other stakeholders (e.g. Berlin-Brandenburg, Type 6). Where consultations had taken place, this was led by the Managing Authority.

The evidence suggests that **existing advisory services will play a key role in supporting EIP.** In some RDPs (such as Andalusia (Type 2), Veneto (Type 3) and Wales (Type 1)), the public, semi-public or private institutions which provide advisory services to farmers (including the bodies designated to implement the Farm Advisory System⁶⁹) will be involved in helping to promote the programme to potential group members. In all Member States, the role played by advisory services will be crucial to the success of EIP. For example, in Croatia (Type 5), the country's agricultural advisory service will set up a help-desk for EIP to answer questions from potential OG member and help to identify partners from business and the research community. It also expects to play a lead role in

⁶⁹ The Farm Advisory System covers the overall organisation and the various public and/or private operators that deliver farm advisory services to farmers in a given Member State. In accordance with Article 12(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy, the scope of the farm advisory system shall cover [inter alia] measures at farm level related to innovation as provided for in rural development programmes.

most OGs in that country. And in Scotland (Type 3), the farm Advisory Service will provide some support, but this is in the process of being procured so will be too late to support the development of the early OGs. Advisory services are also expected to play a role in RDPs' dissemination strategies for EIP (addressed under Indicator 2, below).

The role of innovation brokers divides RDPs. **In most regions, there will not be brokers in the strict sense** but the responsibility for bringing potential actors together to form Operational Groups will be filled by advisory services. In Sweden (Type 3), for example, the innovation broker function is assumed by an innovation support team that sits under the NRN. **Where innovation brokers are not playing a role, concerns were sometimes expressed that this could put the effectiveness of the programme at risk.** Stakeholders in Scotland (Type 3) saw the lack of innovation brokers as a key gap of the EIP implementation there, due to the risk that the programme will only reach those actors already engaged in innovation. In areas that lack a culture of innovation across the wider farming sector, this could be an important barrier to the success of the EIP. Not everyone agreed with this view, with some sharing the expectation expressed by stakeholders in England (Type 2) that farmers and researchers would be sufficiently able to develop their own ideas, without assistance from innovation brokers.

The term 'innovation broker' caused confusion among some stakeholders, including Managing Authorities interviewed for the evaluation. The guidance for programming for the EIP makes clear that a broker's main task is to help prepare a solid project proposal on which all actors in the OG want to engage. The idea is that if innovation brokering results in a good project plan being developed, it will have a better chance of being selected as an OG. If the broker's role was clear, Managing Authorities diverged in their views on the type of organisation best suited to play this role. This is probably because not all MS have well established advisory services in close daily contact with farmers. For instance, in Veneto (Type 3), the MA considers several types of actors can be considered to be innovation brokers i.e. consultants, agronomists, researchers (providing that they focus on solving practical issues) and/or also the region itself. In that region, the tender specifications for setting up OGs will specify the role of innovation brokers without containing a precise description of the skills required. This is in accordance with the guidelines for programming EIP and allows Managing Authorities the latitude to choose the model of innovation brokering which they deem most appropriate to the needs of actors and prospective OGs in their RDP. This broader understanding of the term 'broker' reflects the fact that many RDPs will largely rely on existing actors and bodies with long-standing credentials in the agriculture and agri-food innovation sectors to bring together potential OG members. They will not resort to using brokers in the sense understood by the guidance fully creating bottom-up approaches. This is the approach taken in Spain, with examples including public institutions such as the IFAPA in Andalusia (Type 2) and HAZI in the Basque Country (Type 4) and IRTA in Catalonia (Type 5).

Once Operational Groups are up and running, the programming guidance for the EIP indicates the usefulness of 'facilitators' playing a role to provide organisational support. This role can, but does not have to be, played by the broker who helped the group prepare its project plan. Some RDPs expect facilitators to feature in most of their OGs, although **the inclusion of facilitators is not normally compulsory.** In Wales (Type 1), for example, the Managing Authority expects advisors in the general sense (i.e. not those fulfilling the Innovation Brokerage Role) will participate in and contribute to the activities of OGs. The approach taken by most RDPs is that potential OGs will decide whether or not to include an intermediary as a facilitator within their group to support the running of the project. Frequently, the lead partner is expected to play this role. This is the case in Sweden, although on the understanding that the Innovation Support Team can help OGs with a facilitating function. In some countries, such as Italy, stakeholders considered that the absence of an official definition for facilitators, meant their profile and innovation specific competences may vary considerably from one OG to another. Therefore, the added-value of facilitators is likely to be very different from one EIP project to another. This is fully in line with the intended flexibility in the EIP rules.

Finally, the evidence collected by the evaluation (in particular, interviews conducted as part of the case studies with actors interested in forming OGs) suggests that the level of funding made available through EIP (which can vary significantly from one RDP to another) is likely to attract actors (including primary producers, other agricultural businesses and researchers) to form OGs. This is not surprising, given the evaluation had found that the Managing Authorities interviewed had set funding levels after running an initial consultation with groups representing the interests of actors who would be interested in forming OGs (i.e. there was already some understanding of where funding levels should be set to meet the needs of actors).

But beyond the level of funding, the evidence collected by the evaluation suggests that the EIP concept, with its emphasis on collaboration and putting ideas into practice, is key to the attractiveness of EIP in the eyes of different stakeholder groups. Primary producers and other agricultural businesses consistently told the evaluation team they would welcome the opportunity offered by the EIP concept to put innovative ideas into practice with the help of researchers. Researchers said the EIP concept was attractive because it would allow them to build relationships with primary producers and other actors (inside OGs). These relationships were seen as valuable not just because they could allow the group to put (potentially) innovative knowledge into practice, but also (in the longer term) because they would provide the researchers with links to producers on whom they could collaborate in the gathering of data and testing of ideas in future projects (i.e. beyond the lifetime and/ or scope of the OG). From the perspective of producers, having scientific and practical knowledge available 'on tap' was an attractive element for them to collaborate in EIP.

Stakeholders' views and documentary evidence to confirm: (a) the EIP adds value above and beyond existing forms of support for innovation actors; (b) strategies for dissemination, follow-up and / or implementation of OG results are plausible; (c) envisaged cross-border approaches are plausible; and (d) strength of links at programmatic or OG level to other innovation actions at MS/regional level.

(a) The EIP adds value above and beyond existing forms of support for innovation actors

As would be expected, the level of development of agricultural research and knowledge infrastructure varied significantly among the RDPs. But **even in RDPs where other innovation programmes existed, the EIP's focus on involving primary producers to develop innovative solutions/opportunities was something new.** While the EIP programming guidelines make clear that operational groups can try out ideas that have already been developed by researchers, this is not mandatory nor is the involvement of researchers in operational groups. It is clear that "alone-standing research" as it is described in the programming guidelines, whether basic or applied, cannot be financed.

In some RDPs (e.g. Wales (Type 1), Midi-Pyrénées (Type 5)) with highly rated agricultural research institutions, stakeholders identified an ongoing challenge around bridging the gap between academic knowledge and its implementation across the wider farming and forestry sector. In Flanders (Type 1), the EIP largely corresponded to and complemented the existing AKIS, but was expected to provide additional opportunities by fostering a more bottom-up, farmer-driven approach.

In many RDPs, **stakeholders agreed the participation and involvement of farmers and forest managers constituted the main added value of the EIP (compared with other sources of public support for innovation in the agricultural sector).** Most stakeholders agreed that the EIP is well designed to fill the gap between research and practice, particularly for small farmers, who traditionally do not have access to big European consortia that apply for innovation support (e.g. Andalusia, Type 2). And in many RDPs, the EIP was confused with a new funding lever for investing in practical research in the agricultural sector (e.g. Rhineland-Palatinate, Type 5). Selection criteria relating to the composition of Operational Groups mean primary producers and other **agricultural businesses are more likely to become involved in the innovation process** as

compared to other funding streams. And the relatively small size of EIP, compared to other innovation programmes, was more likely to be attractive to smaller farmers.

EIP was also expected to add value by connecting different types of innovation actors. And, particularly in RDPs with a less developed agricultural sector, it presents an opportunity to drive the modernisation and development of a more competitive farming sector (e.g. Croatia, Type 5). In regions, such as Rhône-Alpes (Type 5), where the agricultural sector is not a focus for the regional Smart Specialisation Strategy (ERDF funds for research and innovation will be focused on other sectors of the regional economy), the EIP is expected to be an even more important source of EU funds to provide support for innovation in the agricultural sector.

In a few RDPs, in particular where the EIP measure was not developed and understood yet, stakeholders expressed scepticism towards EIP and what it would be able to achieve. For example, in Greece (Type 2), stakeholders pointed to the “lack of concrete and measurable targets” and expressed concerns that the EIP represents “wishful thinking” rather than a “carefully designed plan”. This may betray a lack of understanding of the EIP concept, which is intended to provide Managing Authorities with the flexibility to enhance all kind of actors and innovation ideas. In other RDPs (e.g. Bulgaria, Type 6)) the very early stage of implementation made it difficult for stakeholders to estimate with any certainty the value the programme would add to the existing AKIS.

(b) Strategies for dissemination, follow-up and / or implementation of OG results are plausible

If the EIP is to prove effective in leading to more innovation, **the results of an Operational Group’s project must be shared with other innovation actors, beyond those involved in the group.** Whether this actually happens depends on the strategies in place to involve multipliers in the OGs and disseminate the results. At this early stage of implementation, even those OGs which are established are only in their first year of operation, RDPs’ strategies for dissemination are only at the planning stage. Dedicated conditions to include multipliers in the OG projects are seldom applied. Rather, among those Managing Authorities which are at a more advanced stage of planning for the dissemination of OG results (e.g. Catalonia and Rhineland-Palatinate (both Type 5)), multipliers (such as Advisory Services) and tools (such as Managing Authorities’ websites) will be relied up to help promote the work of OGs to primary producers who could benefit from it.

When selecting OGs, RDPs will award points based on the strength of the dissemination strategy put forward in a prospective OG’s project plan. In Greece (Type 2), each proposal should include at least one dissemination/ promotion action to disseminate results. In Rhône-Alpes (Type 5), proposals must include a detailed list of deliverables and details for how project results will be disseminated and targeted to final users so that new ideas can be put into practice by actors beyond the OG. Stakeholders there thought this might include demonstration activities such as experimental farms specialising in developing new techniques and offering professional training to farmers. Existing infrastructure, including LAGs and actors in the Member States’ farm advisory systems, will be used to promote the results, although many RDPs had not yet defined a specific requirements for how this should be done, beyond including clauses in OG contracts that link final payments with the obligation to produce an abstract at the culmination of the project which can disseminated.

In particular, **RDPs will rely on their EIP networks to promote the dissemination of results within the region/ country.** As a minimum, this will include publication of the results in one or more short abstracts containing practical information and audio-visual material and web links for interested innovation actors to learn more. The final payment made to OGs will be linked to dissemination of these results.

In Germany, for example, the NRN has established an open-access database for OGs to share their project results. The result is likely to be that German OGs will deliver results that are widely disseminated, at least throughout Germany and at EU level. The evidence collected for this evaluation, particularly the case studies which looked in detail at the intended approach to EIP implementation in 20 RDPs, suggests that this approach is likely to be followed in most Member States. Yet some concerns were raised with regard to this plan, that if the abstract is only produced in the language of the RDP in which the OG was active (and even if translated into English), it would not be accessible to many innovation actors in other Member States, and particularly smaller farmers who would be less likely to have the requisite language skills. So, while it seems likely for the latter that **RDPs' dissemination strategies will ensure the results are successfully disseminated within the RDP and the Member State in question, whether these results can be shared with users from other countries will depend on the local/national EIP network's translation and promotion efforts.**

Furthermore, in accordance with Article 57(3) of Regulation 1305/2013, "operational groups shall disseminate the result of their projects in particular through the EIP network". The programming guidelines make clear this means the European EIP network, with its interactive website⁷⁰.

(c) Envisaged cross-border approaches are plausible

As explained in section 2.5.2, the primary focus of the EIP is on rural development in the Member States and regions of the EU. Thus, while it was not foreseen in the EAFRD Regulation that cross-border OGs would be the norm, there are several ways that OGs can involve actors from more than one RDP, either between Member States or, for the multi-RDP Member States (most importantly France, Germany, Italy and Spain), between regions within a single Member State. RDPs can be divided between those which **foresee the use of the existing cross-border approaches** to the EIP and **those where it will be not be possible** under existing plans for implementation. The former category includes RDPs which foresee the possibility of cooperation across the boundaries of regional RDPs within a single Member State. This is the case in Spain, where cross-border OGs will be possible through the call for proposals of the national RDP (the main condition is that group members have to be from at least two Spanish regions).

In other RDPs, there are no plans yet for cross-border OGs in the first round of funding (e.g. Croatia, Type 5 and England, Type 2). Managing Authorities explained this choice on grounds of complexity and the time that would be required to put this in place but did not rule it out at a later stage. Indeed, Managing Authorities and other stakeholders in many Member States and regions hoped that the possibilities for cross-border OGs would be broadened and further encouraged in the future.

With regard to the current set-up, they expressed concerns about a lack of guidance for cross-border OGs which deters Managing Authorities from promoting them, even if the EIP guidelines have a dedicated section on cross-border approaches. This may result from the fact that, while the EAFRD Regulation is translated into all EU languages, the programming guidelines are in English only and they may not be fully understood by all Managing Authorities. Some RDPs, such as Greece (Type 2) and Poland (Type 3), do not see cross-border OGs as desirable, even if they were possible under the Regulation. They view Horizon 2020 as a more appropriate route for actors involved with OGs to participate in cross-border research.

⁷⁰ <http://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/>

(d) Strength of links at programmatic or OG level to other innovation actions at MS / regional level

Evidence was limited of concrete links between the **EIP and other innovation measures at Member State and regional levels in the RDPs**. However, the links we did uncover represent a considerable achievement given the early stage of implementation of the EIP.

With regard to the RDPs, the main measures which are seen as linked to EIP are information actions including demonstration activities (Article 14), advisory services (Article 15), and pilot projects (Article 35). In Italy, some regions have made explicit the links between EIP and their regional Smart Specialisation Strategies. In Emilia-Romagna (Type 5), for example, themes for EIP projects were selected on the basis of the four focus areas of the region's Smart Specialisation Strategy. In other RDPs, there is little evidence of links to wider (non-farming specific) innovation programmes beyond H2020. In Croatia (Type 5), for example, the Managing Authority is currently thinking through how to improve linkages to these.

Main findings for sub-question 2.1

The evidence suggests the **EIP funding will be effective at attracting relevant applicants**. EIP's **focus on involving primary producers to develop innovative solutions/opportunities was something new** that adds value to the AKIS in the RDPs looked at as part of the evaluation case studies. The evidence collected by the evaluation (in particular, interviews conducted as part of the case studies with actors interested in forming OGs) suggests that the level of funding made available through EIP (which can vary significantly from one RDP to another) is likely to attract actors. But beyond the level of funding, the EIP concept seems likely to prove attractive to innovation actors (and in some cases, already has). Primary producers and other agricultural businesses are more likely to become involved in the innovation process under the EIP as compared with other funding streams for research in the agricultural sector. Even if there are doubts as to whether OGs are likely to be *farmer-led* (in the sense of the lead partner being a primary producer), the selection criteria put in place by RDPs should be enough to ensure **the interests of primary producers will be at the heart of project plans**, which will focus on solving practical problems faced in the RDP in question.

The composition criteria for the EIP established by RDPs should be sufficient to guarantee **the programme will be effective at engaging the presence in Operational Groups of primary producers and, in some cases, researchers**⁷¹. Some RDPs will focus on groups where several different levels of the supply chain are represented while others are more flexible, so long as the requisite skills and knowledge are present to allow a project to achieve its goals.

The evaluation observed a variety of approaches towards the support provided to applicants although **it is too early to judge how effective support is likely to be**. In some RDPs, the Managing Authority will play an active role and provide direct support to prospective Operational Groups, while in others technical and administrative support would be provided through other bodies. In the preparatory phase, 'brokers' will play a role in some RDPs, although the task of helping OGs draw up their plans will fall to different types of actor from one RDP to another. Once a project is up and running, 'facilitators' will play a role in some RDPs, helping to ensure the organisational aspects of OGs run smoothly. While in some cases the facilitator role will be played by the same broker who helped the group draw up its plans, elsewhere the task of facilitating seems likely to fall to the lead member of the group. To ensure the group collectively possesses the requisite skills for this task to be carried out smoothly, selection criteria in some RDPs

⁷¹ Although it should be clarified that entrepreneurial innovation projects without the involvement of researchers are also within the focus of EIP.

will prioritise groups which include actors with experience of handling EU or national funds, even if this may lead to direct funding to the "usual suspects".

If the EIP is to prove effective in leading to more innovation, the results of an Operational Group's project must be shared with other innovation actors, beyond those involved in the group. The evidence suggests **RDPs will rely mainly on the national EIP networks to promote the dissemination of results within their region and Member State, as the option of including multipliers in the OGs is not too often exploited.** As a minimum, this will include publication of the results in one or more short abstracts, with dissemination linked to the final payment to Operational Groups. While RDPs' dissemination strategies may ensure the results are successfully shared within the RDP and the Member State in question, whether this approach will lead to results reaching innovation actors across national boundaries is less certain and will depend on the efforts of national/regional networks to translate the short abstracts from other MS/regions into national/regional language.

While it was not foreseen in the EAFRD Regulation that **cross-border** OGs would be the norm, there are several ways that OGs can involve actors from more than one RDP, either between Member States or, for the multi-RDP Member States (most importantly France, Germany, Italy and Spain), between regions within a single Member State. RDPs can be divided between those which **foresee the use of the existing cross-border approaches** to the EIP and **those where it will be not be possible** under existing plans for implementation. Looking forward, while stakeholders in a small number of Member States did not view cross-border approaches to the EIP as desirable, far more interviewees hoped that the possibilities for cross-border OGs would be broadened and further encouraged in the future.

In terms of links between the EIP and other innovation measures at Member State and regional levels in the RDPs, while the evaluation did not find widespread evidence of practical connections. However, there were notable examples where such links were being made, which already represents progress given the early stage of implementation.

3.3.3. Efficiency in terms of limiting the administrative burden

Views of key informants to confirm that EIP funding as implemented in MS is attractive and proportionate with the time needed for administration (i.e. time/resources allocated to application, selection, contracting and reporting procedures) taking into account standard procedures for other rural development measures and sources of funding for innovation

The foregoing sub-section has already explained that EIP funding is attractive to applicants. Both the level of funding available and the EIP concept i.e. supporting innovation through an interactive, bottom up approach appeals to innovation actors including primary producers. Nevertheless, the broad consensus of opinion is that the administrative burden associated with EIP is high, although not unusual when compared with the administrative hurdles normally associated with applying for EU funding.

There was some variation among stakeholders with regard to what should be considered the administrative burden associated with EIP. In broad terms, **administrative burden** was understood as the costs associated with complying with obligations to obtain EIP funding. The focus is on meeting obligations to provide information and includes reporting requirements and costs linked to preparing an application for support. Administrative burden does not include tasks which can be considered to be at the core of the EIP concept and which must be carried out in the normal course of implementing an OG's project e.g.

drawing up the plan at the proposal stage or producing an abstract at the culmination of the project⁷².

From the perspective of applicants, the administrative burden associated with EIP as implemented in MS represents a concern. The length of time required to complete the process of applying was criticised by some stakeholders, describing it as a "long, drawn-out process". In Scotland (Type 3), pre-application work was said to take up to four months (when incorporating feedback on draft proposals), with some consultees considering it to be complex, repetitive, and challenging. As such, they found the application to be more onerous than programmes under the previous RDP).

In the Basque Country (Type 4), the administrative burden was said to be heavy (although not considered to be heavier than for other similarly available public funds) for applicants and **could be a factor which would deter small operators** from applying. While these steps do not constitute an administrative burden in the sense defined above (i.e. establishing a well-thought through and thorough project plan is a necessary step in the execution of an OG project) the real issue that this highlights is that some RDPs have chosen not to provide support for the setting-up stage of projects, preferring instead to focus their funding on the operation of OGs. If this step in the development of a project is perceived by potential group members as too bureaucratic or time-consuming, and if no support (either financial or through one of the various means of funding innovation brokers) is provided, some stakeholders suggested that this may deter eligible and otherwise worthy applicants.

Given the risk of some stakeholders being turned off by the prospective of a heavy administrative burden, effective support from Managing Authorities and other actors, including advisory services and innovation brokers, must form an important part of any mitigation strategy. Although most of the burden would be concentrated in the preparatory phase (as prospective groups put together and revise their project plan) once up and running, lead partners in Midi-Pyrenees (Type 5) estimated they would need to spend up approximately 20 days per year on administration. Given the administrative duties associated with being lead partner, Managing Authorities will weigh the capacity of applicants in their selection criteria, in some cases rewarding groups whose members have experience of dealing with EU funds. While this would doubtlessly smooth the operation of projects from an administrative perspective, it could also make it hard to reach farms and smaller entities.

There is also an **administrative burden on Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies**. Among the Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies interviewed, the burden of administering EIP was considered to be in line with that for other EU funding streams including other RDP measures. The resources required to implement EIP varied from one RDP to another, roughly in proportion to the number of OGs expected. In Catalonia (Type 5), the region relies on three full-time equivalent staff to manage EIP, while in Croatia (also Type 5), the country's Paying Agency, which will be responsible for administering the application process, estimated each application would require one full day to process.

Documentary evidence and stakeholder views to confirm administrative burden for managing authorities and applicants/ beneficiaries resulting from EU-level policy choices

In general, stakeholders found it **difficult to separate the administrative burden inherent in EIP's design** (resulting from EU-level policy choices) **with the burden linked to how the programme was implemented** locally (a choice made within the RDP).

⁷² Given the early stage of implementation of the EIP in most RDPs, it has not been possible to establish the administrative burden associated with reporting during the lifetime of an OG project.

A key feature of EIP resulting from the measure's design (i.e. a policy choice made at EU-level), is the possibility afforded to Managing Authorities to programme for a **two-phase application process for EIP support**. Managing Authorities may launch separate calls with different selection criteria for setting up funding and for project funding. Where RDPs provided separate support, firstly, for a project's setting-up and, secondly, its establishment and operation, this was welcomed by stakeholders as something which could **ease the financial and administrative burden** on applicants.

The possibility under EIP for RDPs to provide **lump-sum support** for setting-up coupled with a **relatively simple application**⁷³ was thought to be a good way of encouraging innovation actors take the time and make the effort needed to establish an OG and apply for funding. Where support for setting-up is programmed, applicants will be eligible so long as they submit a valid application (i.e. the support is not conditional upon selection of the application). The data available so far indicate that most RDPs are pursuing a two-step approach to OG funding.

However, the EC's programming guidelines also allow for the EIP projects to be funded as a single phase for the operation of the OG. In other words, this puts the responsibility on actors to establish the OG and full project idea in advance of receiving any funding. This is the case, for example, in Flanders (Type 1), where a single-stage application process is felt to be less-burdensome on applicants. This may reflect the relatively small amount of funding available to Flemish OGs and that the one-step approach taken in Flanders is closer to providing setting up funding rather than financing full projects. The broader point is that, depending on the national innovation infrastructure in place, innovation actors can use EIP to start their project, then take it further through other sources of funding.

Documentary evidence and stakeholder views to confirm administrative burden for managing authorities and applicants/ beneficiaries resulting from RDP implementation

The evaluation found evidence that some particular choices made by some RDPs in their implementation of EIP are likely to add to the administrative burden faced by applicants. In particular, RDP implementation choices which specify **the legal form for OGs are likely to result in an additional burden for applicants** and time delays for the launching of Operational Groups. While the legal form for OGs is not stipulated under any EU rules, some RDPs have decided that OGs must take a specified legal form. For example, in Croatia and Italy, groups which are successful in their application to become an OG must register as an association under Croatian law before receiving financial support for their operations. The registration process can apparently last up to six months, which will result in a delay for the project's launch. By way of comparison, other RDPs leave the choice of legal form for OGs open, allowing a loose association of partners to submit applications under the legal entity of a lead partner. While this has some implications about the trust required among partners (since the lead will be responsible for reporting and distributing payments), it comes with a smaller admin burden that could encourage potentially interested stakeholders to apply.

In terms of the burden related to the way EIP was implemented in the RDPs, the following points were also raised.

- Applicants sometimes complained that **insufficient guidance** for the preparation of OG proposals was provided by Managing Authorities;

⁷³ As suggested by the Guidelines for Programming EIP (December 2014), this might consist of a description of the rough project ideas and its relevance for practice, together with the targeted partner combination to be developed.

- Rules relating to justifying project expenditure, production of supporting evidence and justifications, were criticised by some stakeholders for being unduly onerous and **burdensome to comply** with (e.g. in Catalonia (Type 5) and Brittany (Type 6), stakeholders reported an obligation for OGs to provide three price quotations for equipment required by the project).
- The administrative burden associated with **monitoring** (i.e. during the lifetime of an OG) was unclear to applicants at the time the case studies were carried out.

Views of key informants to confirm that there are ways to improve processes and procedures for implementing the EIP

Having highlighted what they considered to be some of the shortcomings of EIP, stakeholders shared their views on how the programme and its implementation could be improved. Chief among these was **the suggestion that the application process should be simplified and requirements for financial reporting reduced** to lessen the burden on group members. In some RDPs, including England and Scotland, concerns were expressed that the application forms used were similar to those used elsewhere in the RDPs (i.e. for forms of support dealing with larger amounts), and that they are better suited to capital investments than innovation.

Other suggestions made with regard to how processes and procedures could be improved and EIP made more efficient were:

- MAs should define more clearly **what constitutes innovation** and how can it be more clearly defined;
- Targeting priority sub-sets of farmers and actors: according to one NRN, the EIP could be improved if the focus was placed not only on a bottom-up approach, but on a *specific* bottom-up approach i.e. concentrating at micro-level on particular agricultural holdings that are facing difficulties and that could considerably benefit from innovation. As small and small-medium enterprises are those that are most in need of innovation, the programme should do more to focus on them as the key target of the EIP. This is an example of a certain group that could be prioritised in one RDP, but the suggestion is potentially applicable elsewhere, though possibly for different groups depending on national / regional circumstances.
- **Consulting paying agencies more** (possibly by involving them in EIP workshops and meetings) in order to find practical solutions to administrative and audit challenges related to the EIP (audit trails for instance).

Main findings for sub-question 2.2

EIP funding as applied in MS is attractive to potential applicants. Both the level of funding available and the EIP concept i.e. supporting innovation through an interactive, bottom up approach appeals to innovation actors including primary producers.

There was some variation among stakeholders with regard to what should be considered as part of the administrative burden associated with EIP. In broad terms, **administrative burden** was understood as the costs associated with complying with obligations to obtain EIP funding. The focus is on meeting obligations to provide information and includes reporting requirements and costs linked to preparing an application for support. **Although stakeholders consider the application process to be lengthy, it has not prevented them from applying** and it seems to be proportionate with the time needed for other rural development measures and sources of funding for innovation.

However, the evaluation did find evidence that **smaller entities, including some primary producers, may be deterred from applying for funding as a result of the**

administrative burden associated with EIP. The administrative burden falling on Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies and is generally considered to be in line with that for other EU funding streams including other RDP measures.

It is difficult to separate the administrative burden inherent in EIP's design (resulting from EU-level policy choices) with the burden linked to how the programme was implemented locally (a choice made within the RDP). One key feature of EIP resulting from the measure's design (i.e. a policy choice made at EU-level), is the possibility afforded to Managing Authorities to programme for a **two-step application process** for EIP support. Managing Authorities may launch separate calls with different selection criteria for setting up funding and for project funding. Where RDPs provided separate support, firstly, for a project's setting-up and, secondly, its establishment and operation, this was welcomed as a way to ease the financial and administrative burden on applicants. The possibility under EIP for RDPs to provide **lump-sum support** for setting-up coupled with a relatively simple application⁷⁴ was thought to be a good way of encouraging innovation actors to work together to take the necessary steps to invest time in putting together an eligible project proposal.

The evaluation found evidence that **choices made by some RDPs in their implementation of the EIP are likely to add to the administrative burden faced by applicants**. In particular, some RDP implementation choices specifying a particular legal form for OGs are likely to result in an additional burden for applicants and time delays for the launching of Operational Groups. While the legal form for Operational Groups is not stipulated under any EU rules, some RDPs have decided that Operational Groups must take a specified legal form. By way of comparison, RDPs which leave the choice of legal form for OGs open, impose a smaller admin burden that could encourage potentially interested stakeholders to apply. Rules relating to justifying project expenditure were criticised by some stakeholders for being unduly onerous to comply with.

Stakeholders also shared their views on how implementation of the EIP could be improved. Chief among these was **the suggestion that the application process should be simplified and requirements for financial reporting reduced** to lessen the burden on group members. Another important suggestion to ease any difficulties in administering EIP was to involve **paying agencies more in EIP workshops and meetings** in order to find practical solutions to administrative and audit challenges related to the EIP (audit trails for instance).

3.3.4. Evaluation judgement

This theme examined the effectiveness and efficiency of the EIP's implementation through RDPs. Two sub-questions focused on the extent to which RDPs' implementation choices were 1) effective (or provided the necessary preconditions for enabling effectiveness) and 2) efficient (in terms of limiting the administrative burden).

The evaluation has found that EIP funding will be effective at attracting relevant applicants. The EIP's focus on **involving primary producers to develop innovative solutions/opportunities** was seen as something **new** that adds value to the agricultural knowledge and innovation systems (AKIS) in the Member States / regions looked at as part of the evaluation case studies. Agricultural businesses are more likely to become involved in the innovation process under the EIP compared with other funding streams for innovation in the agricultural sector. While there are doubts as to whether OGs are likely to be *farmer-led* in most RDPs, the selection criteria put in place should be enough to ensure **the interests of primary producers will be at the heart of project plans**.

⁷⁴ As suggested by the Guidelines for Programming EIP (December 2014), this might consist of a description of the rough project ideas and its relevance for practice, together with the targeted partner combination to be developed.

The composition criteria for the EIP established by RDPs should be sufficient to make sure Operational Groups bring together **primary producers and, where useful, researchers**. Some RDPs will place a focus on groups where several different levels of the supply chain are represented, while others are more flexible, so long as the requisite skills and knowledge are present to allow a project to achieve its goals. One potential weakness is the ambivalence shown by most Managing Authorities towards having multipliers (e.g. consultants, farmer co-operatives, Producer Organisations) take part in the OGs. Given the need to disseminate project findings widely, involving multipliers directly in OGs is likely to increase effectiveness.

The evaluation observed a variety of approaches towards the support provided to prospective applicants and OGs that have received funding, although **it is too early to judge how effective support is likely to be**. In some RDPs, the Managing Authority have the main responsibility for providing such support, while in others technical and administrative support will be provided through other bodies. In the preparatory phase, 'innovation brokers' will play a role in some RDPs, although the task of helping OGs draw up their plans will fall to different types of actor from one RDP to another. Once a project is up and running, 'facilitators' will play a role in some RDPs, helping to ensure the organisational aspects of OGs run smoothly. While in some cases the facilitator role will be played by the same broker who helped the group draw up its plans, elsewhere the task of facilitating seems likely to fall to the lead member of the group. To ensure the group collectively possesses the requisite skills for this task to be carried out smoothly, some MAs are using / plan to use selection criteria to prioritise groups which include actors with experience of handling EU or national funds, which may result in funding concentrating on the "usual suspects" and limit the effective implementation of the EIP's bottom-up approach.

If the EIP is to prove effective in leading to more innovation, the results of an OG's project must be shared with other innovation actors, beyond those involved in the group. The evidence suggests **RDPs intend to rely mainly on NRNs / RRNs and national EIP networks to promote the dissemination of results within their region and Member State**. As a minimum, this will include publication of the results in a short abstract in the group's native language, with dissemination linked to the final payment to OGs. This should help ensure that the results are successfully shared within the RDP and the Member State in question, whereas the EU-level EIP network will help reach innovation actors across national boundaries.

While it was not foreseen in the EAFRD Regulation that **cross-border** OGs would be the norm, there are several ways that OGs can involve actors from more than one RDP, either between Member States or, for the multi-RDP Member States (most importantly France, Germany, Italy and Spain), between regions within a single Member State. RDPs can be divided between those which **foresee the use of the existing cross-border approaches** to the EIP and **those where it will be not be possible** under existing plans for implementation. Looking forward, while stakeholders in a small number of Member States did not view cross-border approaches to the EIP as desirable, far more interviewees hoped that the possibilities for cross-border OGs would be broadened and further encouraged in the future.

In terms of links between the EIP and other innovation measures at Member State and regional levels in the RDPs, while the evaluation did not find widespread evidence of practical connections. However, there were notable examples where such links were being made, which already represents progress given the early stage of implementation.

Although innovation actors consider the application process to be lengthy, the information available suggests it has not prevented them from applying and seems to be proportionate with the time needed for other rural development measures and sources of funding for innovation. However, the evaluation did find some evidence that **smaller entities**, including some primary producers, may be deterred from applying for

funding as a result of the **lack of advance funding** and administrative burden associated with EIP. An administrative burden also falls on Managing Authorities, though it is generally considered to be in line with that for other EU funding streams including other RDP measures.

Separating the administrative burden inherent in the EIP's design (resulting from EU-level policy choices) with the burden linked to how the programme is implemented locally (a choice made within the RDP) proved difficult. One key feature of the EIP resulting from the measure's design (i.e. a policy choice made at EU-level), is the possibility afforded to Managing Authorities to programme for a **two-step application process** for EIP support.

Where RDPs provided for such a **two-step process**, firstly, for a project's setting-up and, secondly, its establishment and operation, this seems likely to **ease the financial and administrative burden** on applicants, at least during the early stages of planning an OG. The possibility to provide lump-sum support for setting-up coupled with a relatively simple application seems likely to encourage innovation actors to work together to take the necessary steps to invest time in putting together an eligible project proposal.

The evaluation also found evidence that particular **choices made by some RDPs** in their implementation of the EIP are likely to add to the administrative burden faced by applicants. In particular, where RDPs have mandated a specific legal form for OGs, this is likely to result in an additional burden for applicants and time delays for the launching of OGs' projects.

3.4. Theme 3 – EU added value of the EIP network, effectiveness and efficiency of EU level and national networks

3.4.1. The EIP network

This section presents our findings with regard to the (EU level) EIP network.

EQ 3: To what extent are the structures and work programme of the EU level EIP network in terms of supporting the aims of the EIP:

3.1 - adequate to achieve the aims set out in Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013?

3.2 - efficient and providing EU added value?

Definition of key terms

The EU-level EIP network (hereinafter “EIP network”) is described in detail in section 2.4. It is the main EU-level element of the EIP and is comprised of an EU-wide network of agricultural innovation stakeholders (i.e. farmers, forest managers, researchers, advisors, businesses, environmental groups, consumer interest groups and other NGOs) that supports EIP activities through enabling exchange of information and interaction.

The EIP-AGRI network is run by the European Commission (DG Agriculture and Rural Development) with the help of the **EIP-AGRI** Service Point (SP). The SP team facilitates the networking activities and handles the day-to-day operational matters, including a help desk function, EIP website and database of abstracts, networking activities such as Focus Groups, workshops and seminars and the production and dissemination of publications.

Importantly, there are also **national EIP networks** that are specific to the EIP. In most cases, these are a specific entities or committees within the NRN or RRN (this is the case in Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Poland, and Sweden). But in some countries (e.g. Germany, Greece, Italy, and Spain), it is the NRN which is directly involved in supporting innovation and interacting with the EIP network at EU level. National EIP networks have different names in different countries/regions and are sometimes called “EIP networks” by stakeholders, bringing some confusion with the EIP network operating at EU level. A summary of existing (or planned) national EIP networks is presented in Annex A.

The **efficiency** in the context of the EIP network refers to the identification of the best possible relationship between resources employed and results achieved in pursuing its aims.

EU added value, as defined in the Better Regulation Guidelines, refers to changes due to EU action, rather than any other factors. In terms of the EIP network, the additional EU added value depends on the extent to which it establishes mechanisms to effectively capture and disseminate knowledge from the different rural innovation stakeholders across the EU and facilitates partnerships between farmers and the research community.

Understanding of the Evaluation Question

This question aimed to analyse the **effectiveness, efficiency** and **EU added value** of the EIP network.

The **effectiveness** of the EIP network and its implementation choices has been analysed in relation to the following issues:

- Capacity of the EIP network to engage the relevant innovation stakeholders (including participants of OGs, farmers/forestry managers, researchers, and other

stakeholders with an interest) and relevance of its services and activities in relation to their needs regarding knowledge exchange and networking.

- Adequacy of the structures and work programme(s) adopted (i.e. the Service Point and the activities and services it provides) for implementing the network, in particular for collecting and sharing information (on ideas, projects, needs, partners, experts, funding opportunities, events etc.) and for facilitating contact and networking among innovation stakeholders.
- Success of the mechanisms in place for developing relationships between the EIP network, the ENRD (in particular the Subgroup on Innovation) and national or regional rural networks and avoiding duplications/overlaps.

Secondly, the **efficiency** of the EIP network was assessed in terms of value for money. For this analysis, we took into account the (estimated) total EIP and EIP network budgets and looked into what has been achieved so far with the resources available.

The third element in the analysis focused on assessing the **EU value added** of the EIP network, in particular the extent to which the EU dimension of the network is relevant and can achieve results that could not be achieved at Member State / regional levels only. As a starting point, the EU dimension appears relevant because the EIP is a new instrument that, in the first instance, is implemented primarily at the Member State / regional level. However, the dissemination of innovative farming practices throughout the EU is at its heart, and the large number of OGs proposed, the volume of information that is being generated (and will increase exponentially in the next years) and the numbers of farms that need to be reached, mean the network may be instrumental in ensuring that the benefits from agricultural innovation are spread more widely across Europe. Leading from this, the response to the question examined the ability of the network to achieve:

- Economies of scale which enable the EIP network participants to use and/or disseminate information/knowledge/resources more efficiently to address practice needs
- Promotion of best practice across all participating Member States and regions in order to achieve the best possible outcomes from the implementation of the RDPs

The analysis conducted for this evaluation question relied on the following sources:

- Mapping reports and quantitative data related to the EIP network actions and organisation
- Interviews with EIP staff and the Service Point
- Survey of EIP stakeholders
- Findings from the case studies (which included interviews with national authorities, Managing Authorities, and representatives of NRNs and OGs)

Judgment criteria and indicators

The table below presents the evaluation and sub-questions that relate to the assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency and added value of the EIP network. The middle and right columns contain (respectively) the judgement criteria and indicators used to frame the analysis.

Table 13: Judgement criteria and indicators for Evaluation Question 3

EQ 3: To what extent are the structures and work programme of the EU level EIP network in terms of supporting the aims of the EIP:	Judgement criteria	Indicators
3.1 - adequate to achieve the aims set out in Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which the EIP network is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifying and connecting the relevant innovation stakeholders - collecting and facilitating the exchange of information, expertise and good practices - establishing a dialogue between farmers and the research community • Extent to which the structures and processes established for the implementation of the EIP network are adequate to realise its aims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary evidence and views of key informants suggest that relevant innovation stakeholders are aware of the existence of the EIP network and its activities/services/tools (e.g. website, Service Point, events) • Views of key informants suggest that relevant innovation stakeholders are interested in sharing information/ needs through the network • Documentary evidence and views of key informants suggest that relevant innovation stakeholders are using the network tools • Views of key informants suggest that there are barriers/ challenges that prevent relevant innovation stakeholders from building connections and realising synergies • Views of key informants suggest that alternative services could be developed / tools improved to achieve the objectives of the EIP
3.2 -efficient and providing EU added value?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which the structures and work of the EIP network have facilitated the implementation of the EIP • Extent to which the EIP network and its activities are complementary to what could have been achieved by national, regional and local stakeholders alone and creates synergies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary evidence and views of key informants suggests the EIP network complements other activities / services available at national, regional and local levels • Views of key informants suggest the benefits provided by the EIP network could not have been achieved without it in terms of : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Networking across MS and regions - Dissemination of results - Promotion of best practice - Connection to H2020 stakeholders and potential consortia

3.4.1.1. Adequacy of the EIP network's structures and work programmes for achieving its aims

The aims of the EIP network are set out in Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 and are as follows:

- facilitate the exchange of expertise and good practices; and
- establish a dialogue between farmers and the research community and facilitate the inclusion of all stakeholders in the knowledge exchange process.

In the sections that follow we examine the extent to which these aims are being fulfilled by the EIP network in terms of the five indicators listed in the table above. This includes an investigation of the underlying assumption that for the EIP network to be successful there needs to be a critical mass of awareness of and interest in the EIP network among relevant stakeholders and multipliers, as well as (perceived) potential usefulness of the tools/activities it provides. Moreover, we seek to ascertain whether there are any barriers or challenges that are preventing multipliers and rural innovation stakeholders from engaging with the EIP network more actively, and if there are any alternative services or products that could be considered to better meet their needs and interests and therefore enhance the dissemination of innovative farming practices.

Documentary evidence and views of key informants suggest that relevant innovation stakeholders are aware of the existence of the EIP network and are interested in sharing information/needs through it.

The evidence suggests substantial awareness of and interest in the EIP network. At the same time, it also shows that both of these will need to increase substantially as EIP implementation progresses in order for the network to have its intended effect.

More specifically, the online survey of EIP stakeholders (458 responses collected), interviews conducted during the case studies (covering eleven MS and 20 RDPs) and with four industry and farming representative bodies in Brussels revealed that the majority of rural innovation stakeholders who were consulted (researchers, farmers, government authorities, advisors, etc.) are **aware of the existence of the EIP network (and the activities and services it provides), but have had limited direct experience of it yet**. In the online survey, 55% of respondents said they were aware of the EIP network, and 20% of respondents claimed that they had dealt with the EIP network directly (and of these, 42% had had "significant" interaction with it). This is understandable given the early stage of the implementation of the EIP network. This may be indicating that once rural innovation stakeholders come to know the EIP network, they are likely to have a significant level of interaction with it, therefore proving it relevant and useful.

Unsurprisingly, the level of awareness of and interaction with local networks and supporting services such as NRNs was slightly higher than in the case of the EIP network: 65% of respondents were aware of the NRN in their country (compared with 55% in the case of the EIP network). Moreover, 34% of respondents claimed that they had dealt directly with the NRN (against 20% for the EIP network). However, taking into account that NRNs have existed since 2007-2009 (depending on the country) and that they operate at national level, and that the EIP network only started in mid-2013 and operates at EU level, the figures are quite impressive in the case of the EIP network.

Direct experience of the EIP network seemed to be lower in the case study interviews, especially among potential beneficiaries of EIP. This evidence illustrates the key role of national authorities and networks to reach local stakeholders and disseminate information on the EIP network. While most stakeholders recognised the importance of networking and partnering for the innovation process, **only a few had been in contact with the EIP network, with such contact most commonly being made by government authorities**. Other groups such as farmers, researchers, universities, and NGOs knew it

existed and were interested in it, but their experience was not enough to develop clear opinions on how it would support the implementation of the EIP in their countries/regions.

The case study interviews also revealed that the EIP network has a key role to play in organising connections between stakeholders in different countries and that, as mentioned before, it should work with NRNs to achieve this. This was evident in both countries/regions that are more and less advanced in the implementation of OGs.

In a large proportion (but not a majority) of countries/regions, stakeholders consulted were focused on developing their national/regional connections as much as possible (through interacting with the NRNs/RRNs) in order to find partners for their projects which, in most cases, did not involve cross-border collaboration. This was especially the case of stakeholders consulted in Croatia (Type 5) and Bulgaria (Type 6), countries that do not have any active OGs yet. Also, in three Spanish regions (Catalonia, Type 5, Basque Country, Type 4, and Andalusia, Type 2), two French regions (Midi-Pyrénées and Rhône-Alpes -Type 5), and two German regions (Brandenburg and Berlin -Type 3- and Rhineland-Palatinate -Type 5) stakeholders said they were focused on developing strong local and regional connections before looking into national and EU level relations. In these regions, there is an opportunity for the EIP network and NRNs to work together in alerting local stakeholders about the existence of possible partners beyond their own countries/regions and, if there is an interest, facilitating cross-border connections.

There is another group of countries/regions where the interest on transnational sharing of experiences and collaboration is already more evident. The EIP network should take up this interest and, by working with NRNs, help local stakeholders develop cross-border relations. For example:

- In Flanders, Belgium (Type 1), a new entity called the Flemish EIP Network has been established to act as contact point for the EIP network (and EIP in general).
- In Brittany, France (Type 6) there has been little contact with the EIP network (limited to the participation of stakeholders in a Focus Group on protein), but stakeholders reported they would appreciate the network helping them to get in contact with OGs in different countries working on the same topic as them.
- Across the UK, the NRNs are in the process of creating an informal national EIP network which intends to facilitate the sharing of experiences and lessons, documentation and guidance, and provide an opportunity to explore cross-border working (within the countries of the UK).
- In Emilia-Romagna, Italy (Type 5), the MA is interested in participating in more EU-level networking activities such as the recent EIP network workshop (OGs: First Experiences) organised in the Veneto region.
- In the Basque Country, Spain (Type 4), stakeholders consulted were interested in using the EIP network to facilitate knowledge exchange and sharing of results of OGs once they become available.
- In Sweden (Type 3), the Swedish Innovation Network intends to use the EIP Service Point as much as possible in order to promote transnational cooperation.

There is one additional point to mention in relation to the extent that farmers are aware of and are involved in the EIP network, since these are a key target group of the EIP. 9% of respondents⁷⁵ to the online survey claimed to be farmers (8%) or forestry managers (1%). Although this portion was relatively small in comparison to other groups (23% public

⁷⁵ This represents 38 of 434 respondents who answered the question on occupation (i.e. which of the following best describes your occupation?)

authorities, 20% researchers, and 19% advisors), it is nevertheless encouraging that members of one of the hardest groups to reach by the EIP responded to the survey. The survey and case study interviews also revealed that language is a key aspect determining farmers / forestry managers' interest and level of participation in EIP-related activities. Interviewees were of the opinion that they are more likely to participate in initiatives/activities in their own languages.

In addition to this, some interviewees in England (Type 2) suggested that it is likely that the farmers who first engage with the EIP are generally the already "innovative farmers" and that less innovative farmers may need additional time, support and resources to engage with it. In Sweden (Type 3) and Greece (Type 2), interviewees were also of the opinion that farmers in their countries are not normally involved in working internationally. This reinforces the idea that there is an opportunity for the EIP network to work jointly with (or through) NRNs to reach farmers and help them become involved in agricultural innovation and international networking.

Documentary evidence and views of key informants suggest that relevant innovation stakeholders are using the network tools

Evidence collected through the online survey and case studies suggests that rural innovation stakeholders are **just beginning to use EIP network tools**, which is reasonable taking into account that the EIP network - and the EIP in general - is still in an early stage of development in most countries/regions and that a great portion of the information that will be disseminated through this network (e.g. results of OGs, experiences and best practices) still needs to be generated.

Feedback provided on the different products and services offered currently by the EIP network was generally positive, but many thought it was too early to comment further on their usefulness and effectiveness for facilitating the inclusion and dialogue of all stakeholders in the knowledge exchange process.

Both the survey and case studies interviews suggest that the **EIP website** is the product that stakeholders are most aware of. Nearly all respondents in the groups who had dealt with the EIP network directly said that they had visited the website (96%) and almost a third of these had done so at least two to three times per month (32%). The survey also revealed that many had also registered to it (i.e. had a username and password to access it) and searched for information (people, projects, ideas).

Feedback on the EIP website collected via the case study interviews was limited, but some stakeholders expressed the view that sometimes they had found it **difficult to find the information** they were looking for. For example, certain stakeholders in France who had tried to identify other OGs involved in similar topics said they did not find this information easily on the website. In the Basque Country (Spain), interviewed stakeholders were disappointed by the lack of information on projects and existing OGs on the EIP website. In Flanders, Belgium, several stakeholders said that they found Google more useful than the EIP database to search for specific projects or people. Moreover, they mentioned that the amount of information on the website was sometimes overwhelming, undermining its potential usefulness. EU-level interest groups added that they too found the volume of information daunting and had a concern that this would increase substantially once OGs began to report project results. They also felt that simpler content was needed, that the language barrier for non-English speakers was significant and that more widespread dissemination of simple factsheets and project summaries (such as the EIP practice abstracts⁷⁶) would help industry and farmers access information from the EIP network.

⁷⁶ The EIP has a common format for reporting on innovation projects. This common format consists of a set of basic elements characterising the project and includes one (or more) "practice abstract"(s). The latter consist of

People who have experienced the EIP network directly **have also used several of its publications**, including the EIP Focus Groups reports, EIP newsletter, magazine and others. According to survey results, the Service Point, which is available for ad hoc, tailored support, was slightly less used than the rest of the services.

Participation in **face-to-face events** (e.g. Focus Groups, seminars, field visits) was particularly popular among certain groups of stakeholders such as public authorities⁷⁷, advisors and researchers. Due to their relatively small size, these activities are able to capture only a very small proportion of rural innovation stakeholders, but were nevertheless seen by participants as “very useful” activities. In the online survey, field visits, workshops and Focus Groups received the highest ratings in terms of usefulness (with 56% of respondents (on average) saying they had been “very useful” to their work). This confirms the importance of face-to-face activities in building connections and enhancing networking of rural innovation stakeholders.

The case studies and interviews suggest that some reflection could be given to the types of events that are organised and the ways used to promote them. Confirming what was found in the survey, representative bodies who had participated in events had found them very useful indeed. But they also reported that most of those attending were the ‘usual suspects’ who work in or closely with Brussels organisations and that there was a need to engage a broader range of stakeholders, including farmers. They said this could be achieved by holding more events in MSs and by hosting them at sites that farmers feel comfortable in, e.g. at demonstration or commercial farms which have adopted innovations. Field visits are an example of the type of events that are likely to be more engaging to farmers.

It is worth pointing out that one of the main drawbacks that emerged from the case studies in relation to the information that is currently being disseminated by the various existing rural networks (and especially by the EIP network) is that **most of it is in English**. This highlights the importance of the availability of resources to deliver translations of the material that is being generated and that is meant to reach farmers. This also relates to the importance of using a simple, clear and concise language that can be engaging to practitioners (as indicated in the guidelines for developing the practice abstracts⁷⁸). The role of NRNs and local support services is key in this respect, as these are meant to be the main multipliers of the information from the EIP network at national and regional level and are also those who are more likely to reach farmers. In effect, the impact and extent of influence of the EIP network is highly dependent on the effort made by NRNs, and national EIP networks, to translate and make information coming from the EU level “digestible” to practitioners and other stakeholders at national, regional and local level.

Examples of this were provided in various regions/countries. In Brittany, France, stakeholders who were involved in an EIP Focus Group on protein said that because the working language was English, some stakeholders who only spoke French could not participate (for instance, one farmer who was interested in being involved). In Greece, stakeholders consulted mentioned that there is a need to make results of Focus Groups available in simple and less-technical language in order to facilitate dissemination in the country. In Veneto, Italy, there were concerns that local stakeholders and in particular farmers, forestry managers and small businesses may not be able to understand the information provided on the EIP website given it was mainly in English. In the Basque Country, Spain, stakeholders also complained that the information in the EIP website is not yet available in all EU languages. Although some NRNs, and national EIP networks,

a description of the objective of the project in native language and in English and a short summary (in native language) of the final or expected outcomes. The summary should be as interesting as possible for practitioners (i.e. farmers/end-users), using a direct and easy understandable language and pointing out entrepreneurial elements (https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/eip_common_format_-_14_oct_2015.pdf)

⁷⁷ In the online survey, there was a distinction between national, regional and local authorities. However, for the analysis, we grouped the three in a common category called “public authorities”.

⁷⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/eip_common_format_-_14_oct_2015.pdf

have already begun to translate relevant materials, more efforts are still needed to multiply, promote and disseminate the EIP material produced at EU level and enable it to serve as inspiration for national/regional OGs.

Views of key informants suggest that there are barriers/challenges that prevent relevant innovation stakeholders from building connections and realising synergies

The online survey and case studies served to identify some challenges that need to be overcome in order to facilitate the development of cross-border connections of relevant innovation stakeholders, namely:

- **Limited knowledge about the EIP network:** As stated before, both the survey and case studies revealed that given that the EIP is in an early implementation stage, knowledge of the initiative (and the EIP network) is still limited across the EU. Farmers and forestry managers are one of the audiences that are less aware of the EIP network. It is worth noting that this was mentioned as concerning in the case of NRNs too⁷⁹, meaning that one of the EIP's main target audiences is still not well-represented in the structures in place at either EU, national and regional level. This is partly due to the EIP's (and its networks) early stage of implementation, meaning knowledge may increase alongside progress with implementation. There are also some positive developments taking place at national level that may further enhance farmers' awareness and involvement, for example, action plans of NRNs in several Member States that include the dissemination of OG results through the setting-up of experimental farms and professional training for farmers.
- **Lack of language skills:** This emerged as a key challenge for accessing and using the EIP products and services and for building cross-border connections, in particular in the case of farmers. During the case studies, stakeholders signalled that publishing information and organising activities only in English was a risk to the uptake of results by farmers. The fact that NRNs' action plans foresee to disseminate innovation information through different channels, including, in many cases, the translation of key documents (e.g. practice abstracts) into the national language, is likely to increase access of stakeholders to EIP information. Nevertheless, considering the number of OGs proposed across the EU, the limited resources of NRNs, and the diversity of potential languages to cover, access and use of EIP information disseminated through the EIP network will remain a challenge.
- **Limited financial resources and/or time to participate actively** (particularly, face-to-face events which often require travel) was also mentioned as challenging, especially in the case of farmers and SMEs whose engagement is a vital part of the EIP's bottom-up approach. There are some positive examples of countries/regions which have addressed this challenge by, for example, implementing the EIP with strong relations to other existing frameworks that are also supportive of a further engagement of farmers in innovation (Rhône-Alpes, France – Type 5). Another example is the NRN in Italy which decided to provide financial support to encourage regional and national stakeholders to participate in a workshop held in Veneto which aimed to share first experiences of implementing the EIP at EU level.⁸⁰
- **Early implementation stage of OGs:** According to stakeholders interviewed during the case studies, in countries/regions that are currently in the setting up phase of OGs, networking activities are less attractive. In these cases, OGs are currently very busy with the administrative aspects of their applications or with

⁷⁹ This was mentioned particularly during case studies interviews in Flanders, Belgium (Type 1), Bulgaria (Type 6), Croatia (Type 5), and in Spain, although in this last case the reference was to the low level of awareness of 'EIP stakeholders' in general, rather than specifically of farmers.

⁸⁰ EIP workshop "Operational Groups: First Experiences" organized in Legnaro (Veneto) in April 2016.

launching their projects and therefore have little time to participate in networking activities.

- **Intellectual property rights:** In one country (Sweden), stakeholders raised a concern in relation to protecting innovative ideas and dissemination activities through the various EIP-related networks. The MA in that country had already identified this to be a potential future issue and was currently considering what approach to adopt to spreading project results.
- **Limited experience of working internationally:** This was mentioned in only a few countries (namely Greece and Sweden), but is likely to be applicable to other countries too. Certain stakeholders (crucially, many farmers) are not accustomed to being involved in cross-border collaboration.

Views of key informants suggest that alternative services could be developed/tools improved to achieve the objectives of the EIP

Generally speaking, the EIP network should ensure that it serves the needs of those stakeholders that are meant to benefit the most from the EIP network, in particular smaller-scale operators such as farmers and SMEs. This remains a challenge not only for the EIP network at EU level but for national EIP networks and OGs in general. From the feedback collected through the case study interviews, it seems that, rather than alternative services, the national EIP networks need to work on expanding the use of the products and services the EIP network at EU level already provides. Moreover, it should focus on working with NRNs in identifying multipliers at Member State / regional level which can help to disseminate the information that circulates in the EIP network and also raise awareness of the possibilities this network provides in term of building cross-border connections. Examples of such multipliers are farming / agricultural trade press, demonstration farms, advisory services (public and private), farmers / SME associations, etc.

Some actions could be taken with this in mind, namely:

- **Further integration between the EIP network and the ENRD, as well as strengthening links to existing national or regional networks:** EU-level interest groups highlighted that ENRD is an important network on rural development at EU level and thus developing closer synergies with the EIP network would help to develop collaborative working with the benefit of delivering innovation and investment support in a coordinated way. Moreover, during the case studies, national/regional networks were confirmed to be the main networking structures that rural innovation stakeholders are currently using for establishing cooperation and developing OGs. The EIP network and these other structures at EU, national and regional level have yet to build stronger relationships. There is a significant amount of expertise and knowledge that should flow through these networks and be disseminated across the EU to form a real EU wide EIP network.
- **Increasing the engagement of farmers:** The channels to achieve this are the existing national or regional networks, which are closer to given territories, multipliers and local stakeholders. Furthermore, farmer co-operatives, local supply chain partnerships and farmer organisations have very effective local connections with farmers which could be used to engage them in the network and to disseminate information. But in order to facilitate the involvement and participation of farmers in activities at EU level it is necessary that the EIP network improves connections and working with NRNs which can provide translation capacity and also tailor the information to the local contexts, interests and needs. NRNs should also contemplate the provision of translation services during activities involving face-to-face contact. Using simple and less-technical language in shorter publications and communications was also mentioned a key element for facilitating farmers' access to innovation information. Practice abstracts are a good example of the type of publications that are most suitable for this audience.

- **Increasing data-sharing between the EIP website and NRNs websites:** In particular, stakeholders consulted were interested in sharing data in relation to people/organisations registered in the different websites. Whereas all OGs are required to register on the EIP website, the links between this website and websites or databases created by the NRNs are still to be developed. Sharing information between the EU level website and national/regional teams would provide valuable learning on the type of organisations and individuals who register in the different levels, and identify gaps.
- **Considering the use of additional channels/tools for disseminating information, for instance audio-visual material:** Stakeholders have suggested disseminating Focus Groups' recommendations via short videos in simple and concise narratives that could be disseminated via YouTube. Other "non-conventional" means suggested during the interviews were demonstrational activities and projects (such as agricultural parks, experimental farms, model farms that could be part of study visits organised by the EIP network). It is important that these events are distributed across the EU to promote take-up from farmers and SMEs.
- **Organising activities involving face-to-face contact and targeted at MAs:** There is an interest that there are more events related to the challenges faced by regions/countries when implementing the EIP. In particular, MAs are interested in getting feedback in relation to how other MAs have interpreted the Regulation and guidelines, and how they have overcome the obstacles faced. Further engaging MAs in activities like this organised by the EIP network could also help to increase knowledge and appreciation of the benefits of engaging further with a network of rural innovation stakeholders at EU level.

Main findings for sub-question 3.1

The evidence suggests that there is an appetite for the types of services the EIP network provides, as evidenced by the relatively high level of usage of the website, and the positive feedback on the focus groups and other events. However, the EIP network is faced with a significant challenge. The OGs and other activities will produce (and indeed are already producing) vast amounts of information. Each piece of information will only be directly relevant to a small proportion of the overall target audience, while potential users (who must often deal with resource as well as language constraints) find it difficult to navigate and access. Moreover, the limited resources of the EIP network mean it will struggle to engage large numbers of relevant stakeholders itself or translate all of the material into local languages.

This speaks to the importance of connecting with national and regional networks as much as possible in their capacity as multipliers and in particular to incentivise them to take up their tasks to foster innovation as listed in Article 54 of the EAFRD Regulation (see section 2.2.2 on the EIP's legal base). In addition, there is a priority to organise as many strategic activities and events as possible, targeting key stakeholders and especially multipliers. Materials also need to be presented (particularly on the website) in a way that is as user-friendly and accessible as possible. This could entail among other things a searchable system of categorising information based on a number of key parameters (e.g. geography, sub-sectors and themes).

3.4.1.2. Efficiency and EU added value of the EIP network

Another important aspect in this evaluation was to assess the costs and added value of the EIP network. This is to examine whether the EIP network is making good progress towards the expected results with the money spent (efficiency). In particular, the added value of the EIP network depends on the extent to which it establishes mechanisms to effectively capture and disseminate knowledge from the different rural innovation stakeholders across the EU and facilitates partnerships between farmers and the research community. The

paragraphs below examine this, focusing on what has been achieved so far with the resources available and what can be realistically expected later in the 2014-2020 programming period.

Documentary evidence and views of key informants suggests the EIP network complements other activities/services available at national, regional and local levels

It is clear that the EIP network has the potential to fulfil a specific niche. Since OGs are implemented mainly within national/regional borders, the EIP network has the potential to complement such activities by disseminating information and ideas and providing opportunities for rural innovation stakeholders from different Member States to collaborate and exchange experiences and best practice, as well as OGs results. Case study findings collected at national/regional levels confirmed that such links were not being built through other means, while EU level representatives were adamant about the crucial role for the EIP network.

The evidence suggests that despite the limited budget (i.e. estimated 3% of total spending on the EIP⁸¹), the EIP network is beginning to realise this potential in practical terms. For example, many case study interviewees considered the network's ability to facilitate contacts and the exchange of information between stakeholders in different countries/regions to be its most important feature. In addition, the online survey showed that the EIP network has already helped connect rural innovation stakeholders from different groups (i.e. farmers, researchers, government authorities, etc.) and in different countries.

In the survey, we asked respondents if the EIP network had put them in touch with other agricultural or forestry stakeholders and 27 of 74 respondents (i.e. 36%) agreed that this happened either "more than once" (17) or "once" (10). However, it should also be said that the low number of respondents who choose to answer this question indicates that the network still has considerable room to grow. This is unsurprising, given the newness of the EIP, but it highlights the importance of continuing to build strong links between the EIP network and NRNs / RRNs and national EIP networks.

The findings also demonstrated in concrete terms how the EIP network can complement NRNs/RRNs. While in many countries/regions the latter are important for bringing together partners in potential OGs, as well as for generating collaborations between national/regional stakeholders, the EIP network plays a complementary role by **facilitating cross-border collaboration, the sharing of experiences and learning**. Some examples of this, based on the case study findings, are listed below:

- In Flanders, Belgium (Type 1), a Flemish EIP group has been established to link domestic activities with wider EU activities. The regional EIP network is made up of the Flemish Regional Network (FRN), the MA, and the Platform for Agricultural Research (which brings together farmers' organisations, government authorities, universities, and research institutions). It acts as contact point for the EIP network (and EIP in general), among other things helping to organise and contribute to EIP Focus Groups. Through Focus Groups, the regional EIP network involves key stakeholders from the Flanders innovation system (including experts from research institutions) in EU level discussions about key issues affecting agriculture. These discussions are then used to make recommendations for research topics at regional

⁸¹ This percentage has been calculated based on information provided by DG AGRI which estimated total spending by the EIP network of circa €2 million per year. The contract period lasts seven years (2014-2020), meaning that the total spending for the whole period will amount to circa € 14 million. The funds covers all activities included in the EIP network's Annual Work Programmes (i.e. Focus Groups, workshops, seminars, Service Point (10 FTEs), communication and website content). As shown in Table 7 (section 2.5.2), total EIP budget (considering both national and EU funds) is of circa € 514 million (for countries where information is available). Therefore, the EIP network total spending represents 3% (approx.) of total EIP budget.

level. The Flemish EIP Network also records the research topics and activities across Flanders and feeds this into the EIP website.

- In Italy, by taking inspiration from the EIP network, the NRN has planned to organise national focus groups on topics that are particularly interesting for Italy (e.g. extensive livestock farming, viticulture, dried pulses, cereal production, valorisation of waste and residues in the fruit cultivation).
- In Poland (Type 3), the NRN (Agricultural and Rural Innovation Network - SIR) and the National Centre for Rural Advisory Services (CDR) recognised the need for rural innovation stakeholders to work together and learn from each other's experiences. To facilitate this, the SIR is creating a shared 'virtual office' with the Regional Rural Advisory Centres (ODRs) that is expected to function following the model of the EIP network. This virtual office would allow the dissemination of information about OGs and potential partners seeking to form OGs across Poland, and potentially even help attract foreign partners.
- In the Basque Country and Catalonia, Spain (Type 4 and 5 respectively), EIP Focus Groups were positively perceived by the interviewed stakeholders. The work of these groups was judged to have been useful to enrich discussions at local level and to develop EIP projects and OGs. In Catalonia, regional focus groups, similar to the EU-level ones, are already being implemented.
- In Sweden (Type 3), the EIP network was thought to provide the potential to tap into the knowledge and competencies across Europe. The opportunity for Sweden to engage in the EU research and innovation landscape was considered to be relevant given Sweden's agricultural sector's poor performance in this regard to date.
- In Scotland (Type 3), a representative from the NRN who attended an EIP network workshop in Veneto, Italy, valued that representatives from other countries shared information on the implementation of EIP which had assisted them to understand how the initiative could be better implemented in Scotland. This also formed the basis of recommendations that the NRN presented to the Scottish Government.
- In Wales (Type 1), representatives from the government and NRN have attended some EIP network events, which they judged as very useful. The Welsh Government intends to use experiences of OGs in other Member States to help promote EIP in Wales. In particular, they said these experiences will allow them to provide examples to farmers which they can relate to.

At the same time, it is important to note that in some cases the **intended interplay and respective roles of the EIP network, NRNs/RRNs and national EIP networks was not always clear and misunderstandings came up during the interviews**. For example, a number of interviewees thought that the aim of the EIP network was mainly to develop EU-level or cross-border OGs, an idea that generated mixed feelings as some believed that proximity to the territory and to small producers was a necessary condition for the success of innovation actions. EU-level interest groups were particularly keen to see more clarity on how the different EIP-related networks (i.e. EIP network, ENRD, NRNs/RRNs and national EIP networks) linked together at regional, national and EU level, and felt that this needed to be communicated more effectively to stakeholders.

Views of key informants suggest that the benefits provided by the EIP network could not have been achieved without it in terms of: (i) networking across Member States and regions; (ii) dissemination of results; (iii) promotion of best practice; and (iv) connection to H2020 stakeholders and potential consortia.

At this stage of EIP implementation, and given the budget available, the EIP network to some degree has supported networking across Member States and regions, disseminated

information and experiences, promoted best practices, and connected EIP and H2020 stakeholders. The following paragraphs provide some concrete examples from the research.

In terms of **networking across Member States and regions**, the online survey provided concrete examples of cases in which the EIP network facilitated the development of cross-border links and collaborations (see below). In the case studies, interviewees also saw the EIP network to complement NRNs/RRNs in that it provides a channel for linking with stakeholders in other countries/regions.

The examples that came out of the online survey were the following.

- A respondent from Bulgaria claimed that the EIP network (specifically a Focus Group) had helped him to get in touch with rural innovation stakeholders from various countries (e.g. Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, among others) and start working on a project together⁸².
- A Spanish farmer said that the EIP network had helped him and others develop a collaborative project on biochar that involved various EU Member States.
- A German researcher was able to set up a cooperation project off the back of an EIP workshop.
- An agricultural advisor from Croatia was able to find a speaker for an event in his country.
- A Swiss researcher explained that the EIP network helped him get in touch with the individuals needed to test an idea in real-world conditions.

Based on this, it is possible to say that the EIP network has the potential to add substantial value in terms of providing opportunities for meeting/connecting people across the EU and facilitating the development of collaborative projects. The extent to which this potential is fulfilled will of course be highly dependent on an enhanced awareness and knowledge of the network throughout Europe and across all groups of rural innovation stakeholders. With the budget available, the EIP network has generated a massive amount of information already and has established contacts with stakeholders at national and regional level. It is important that the EIP network works now in conjunction with other rural networks at national/regional level (NRNs/RRNs and National EIP networks) in order to bring that information to local stakeholders (ideally, in their own languages).

With regard to **dissemination of results of OGs**, OG representatives are required to register on the EIP website and disseminate the results of their work via the EIP network. The extent to which this will work is difficult to assess given that OGs are at an early stage of implementation in most countries/regions. But the evidence does show that the EIP network however has provided good value for money by generating and disseminating its own information on research needs and solutions for practical problems in the rural sector via the organisation of 23 Focus Groups, 14 workshops, three seminars, and over 100 missions to Member States⁸³. It has also compiled and updated a mailing list for direct mailing and prepared over 100 publications (one article, 19 brochures, 37 documents, 14 fact sheets, one good practice paper, three magazines and 28 Focus Group reports)⁸⁴. Finally, it has created a database of people, projects and ideas which can be publicly accessed via the EIP website and that provides an array of information to be searched and shared by rural innovation stakeholders across the EU.

⁸²This was the HNV-Link partnership, which was developed as a result of the HNV Focus Group, URL: <http://www.hnvlink.eu/>

⁸³ As per data provided in the EIP network's Annual Work Programmes (2014-2016)

⁸⁴ As per data retrieved from the EIP website on 30 September 2016.

In addition to this, the online survey and case studies both uncovered some evidence that the EIP network is helping to **promote best practices**. For example, a researcher/academic from Baden-Württemberg, Germany claimed that the reports available in the EIP website helped him understand discussions and decision-making processes in Brussels, which he thought to have an impact on transparency regarding the aims and approach of the CAP. A representative from a rural development resource centre in Rhône-Alpes, France mentioned that the network had helped them to draft a pitch on support to newcomers in agriculture, which included references and benchmarking on how newcomers had been supported in different Member States. The discussion above on complementarities between the EIP network and activities at other levels also described incidences of key stakeholders learning from EIP network events and putting new practices into place in their own countries / regions.

Further to this, the case studies have shown that the EIP network's added value is bigger **where the NRNs and/or RRNs (or dedicated national EIP networks) have developed strong links with it**. NRNs/RRNs play a key role in linking regional/national stakeholders and activities with EU activities, as well as facilitating access of local stakeholders to innovation information that circulates in the EIP network. These networks, together with national EIP networks (where available) promote EIP locally, provide information about the initiative, contact potential applicants and partners for OGs, disseminate (and in several cases also translate) results of OGs and publications, and feed back to the EU-level information on issues/concerns at the national/regional level.

In this respect, there are already some promising examples of how the EIP network can articulate with national/regional networks and maximise the opportunities for networking and dialogue between the different rural stakeholders:

- The NRN in France has a specific contact point dedicated to EIP which is very well perceived by the interviewed stakeholders and that, together with regional networks, induce rural innovation stakeholders' participation in national and international networks.
- In Germany, the Deutsche Vernetzungsstelle (DVS), which is the national rural support unit for EIP, represents the interface between stakeholders at regional, national and European level. It organises information events, fosters networking, takes part in EU meetings, and disseminates EIP results in Germany.
- In Italy, the NRN informs the EIP network about Italian projects and results and also informs Italian stakeholders about the initiatives of the EIP network (e.g. through its website or during seminars and meetings).
- In Sweden, there is a special Innovation Network within the NRN that is the link between the wider European EIP network and the Swedish OGs. The Innovation Network encourages and facilitates the dissemination of knowledge from and to the different networks.
- In England, the teams at the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) and NRN are working closely with the EIP network. There have been several European events that the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) staff have attended and learned from experiences of programme teams from across Europe.

Finally, in terms of **connections to H2020 stakeholders and potential consortia**, the evidence presented in section 3.5.3 (related to EQ 5.2 "To what extent is the EIP complementary and coherent with Horizon 2020") indicates strong links and a solid basis for potential collaboration between the EIP and H2020. The analysis confirmed a good alignment between topics, priorities and approaches covered under the two initiatives, in particular in the second (and current) bi-annual Work Programme 2016-2017 of H2020, which incorporated agricultural and forestry priorities as part of the strategic programming approach undertaken during the design of the work programme. This is likely to give place

to concrete collaborations between EIP and H2020 stakeholders in the future. A positive sign of this is that, despite the early stage of the EIP network implementation (and of EIP overall), it was possible to find already some evidence of connections to H2020 stakeholders that were made through the EIP network.

This is the case of two EIP Focus Groups (organised by the EIP network) which were instrumental for starting thematic networks funded under H2020. One was the Focus Group on Short Food Chains (2014-15) which stimulated the creation of the "Short supply chain Knowledge and Innovation Network (SKIN)". This thematic network (approved in 2016) includes a number of members of the Focus Group and builds strongly on its findings. The second example is relatively less direct, but still provides evidence of links between the EIP network and H2020. The thematic network "Data Driven Dairy Decisions for Farmers (4D4F)" works on precision farming based on sensor data and its development drew on the reports and experience of some members of the Focus Group on Precision Livestock Farming (November 2015).

In line with what is stated in section 3.5.3, the use of the common format for abstracts by EIP OGs, thematic networks and multi-actor projects, as well as the dissemination of these abstracts via the EIP network, is an important precondition to continue on this path and foster additional connections and consortia between EIP and H2020 stakeholders. The use of abstracts and their dissemination through the EIP network has so far remained limited with very few OGs and H2020 projects having published their projects under the EIP common format. Even though this is mainly due to the early stage of implementation of these projects, increasing EIP and H2020 stakeholders' awareness of the EIP network and the advantages of using a common format for abstracts would help to produce the expected results in terms of connections and collaborations

Main findings for sub-question 3.2

The EIP network has the potential to complement other activities/services available at national, regional and local levels and provide additional opportunities to collaborate internationally. Taking into account its relatively limited budget (estimated to 3% of total EIP budget), evidence suggests that this potential is already being realised to some extent, particularly with regard to generating and disseminating information, facilitating cross-border collaboration, promoting best practices and fostering connections between EIP and H2020 stakeholders. As OGs, multi-actor projects and thematic networks continue to be established and results begin to emerge, the EIP network has a critical role to play in terms of disseminating their results using the EIP common format for abstracts and making connections between OGs in different countries/regions and potential Horizon 2020 partners. Sufficient budget will need to be made available for innovation networking activities.

The research also highlights the need to further develop the EIP network's connections with national/regional networks in order to be able to reach and make innovation information accessible to farmers/forest managers and other local stakeholders. Good links between the EIP network, NRNs/RRNs and national EIP networks are essential to help raise awareness and participation of rural innovation stakeholders across the EU. The focus should be placed on developing connections with national/regional multipliers, as well as organising and providing the information that is already being generated (and that will increase exponentially over the next years) in a way that is accessible to all stakeholders, and in particular to farmers.

3.4.1.3. Evaluation judgement

This part of the evaluation looked at the extent to which the structures and work programme of the **EU level EIP network** are adequate to achieving its aims and efficient at providing EU added value.

The EIP network, which is run by the European Commission (DG AGRI) with the help of the Service Point, represents the **main EU-level component** of the EIP implementation. It plays a crucial cross-border role in facilitating the exchange of expertise and good practices, promoting dialogue between farmers and the research community and helping to connect the EIP with other EU programmes, particularly Horizon 2020.

The evaluation found that **this logic broadly holds in practice**, taking into account the early stage of implementation and the EIP network's limited budget. It has succeeded in generating interest among rural innovation stakeholders across the EU, particularly as a tool for cross-border knowledge exchange and dissemination of information and experiences.

The **pan-European approach** of EIP and the **ability to share lessons and form partnerships across countries and regions** are seen as a **distinctive and potentially powerful aspects** of the initiative. The EIP network is seen as having a critical role in this, with the potential to provide substantial additional EU added value. Since OGs are implemented mainly at national/regional levels, the EIP network is particularly useful to make the initiative more 'European' beyond the effect of incentivising innovation in each of the Member States.

The evaluation found evidence that **those engaging with the EIP network so far have had positive experiences**, but that, beyond this relatively small core group, awareness and levels of direct engagement are still low. In part this is due to the early stage of EIP implementation. But it also needs to be recognised that, due to practical constraints (mainly to do with the amount and variety of information that the EIP is expected to generate, combined with language barriers and resource constraints), it would be very difficult for the EIP network to engage *directly* with large numbers of farmers and other stakeholders from across Europe in an effective and efficient way.

Therefore, **linkages and synergies with other relevant networks** focused on rural development, national / regional Rural Networks (NRNs/RRNs) and (where they have been set up) national EIP networks are key to reach large numbers of stakeholders across the EU and in particular farmers and forest managers. It will be important to address this issue for the EIP network to disseminate OG results effectively, facilitate the development of cross-border collaborations, and increasingly link potential partners for H2020 consortia.

In many cases, the **links with the NRNs/RRNs are already well developed**, leading to the spread of best practices regarding EIP implementation. But in other countries / regions there has been confusion about the purpose and role of the different rural networks (NRNs / RRNs, National and EU level EIP networks). If this does not improve in the countries / regions in question, the initiative's cross-border European potential could be undermined.

There is also **room for integrating the EIP network more effectively with the ENRD**. Both are (potentially) effective on their own, but the role which the ENRD has in capacity building and knowledge exchange could support the innovations developed by the EIP and disseminated through the EIP network. Another challenge for the EIP network is consequently to involve the ENRD, NRNs, RRNs, and national EIP networks to play a greater 'network of networks' role.

3.4.2. National Rural Networks and the EIP

EQ 4: To what extent is the National Rural Networks' design and operation with regard to innovation:

4.1 - adequate for achieving the aim set out in point (d) of Article 54(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013?

4.2 - efficient?

Definition of key terms

National Rural Networks (NRNs) and regional rural networks (RRNs) are funded through RDPs and described in detail in section 2.5.1, sub-section iv of this report. They play an important role in the implementation of the EIP at Member State / regional levels, most importantly through four areas of activity that relate to innovation. These are (i) raising awareness of and involvement in EIP AGRI of relevant stakeholders; (ii) facilitating the search for OG partners; (iii) networking for advisers and innovation support services; and (iv) collecting and disseminating examples of OG projects.

The key term '**efficient**' is defined in the Better Regulation Guidelines as "the relationship between the resources used by an intervention and the changes generated by it (either positive or negative)". For the purposes of this question, we have considered efficiency in terms of the extent to which the costs related to dealing with the NRNs are justified given their contribution to the EIP.

Understanding of the Evaluation Question

This question aims to assess the extent to which the National Rural Networks are:

- Adequate, with clear contributions of NRNs to:
 - the dissemination, at regional, national and EU level, of knowledge and good practices as well as of research needs from practice towards the scientific community
 - the provision of translation services, helpdesk functions and partner search services.
- Efficient, with optimised administrative burden compared to the innovation-related benefits they bear

To answer this question, we first assessed the extent to which rural innovation stakeholders are aware of the NRNs and effectively use NRNs' tools and services. We further investigated the role of NRNs as providers of key information about innovation actions, including the EIP. This entailed an analysis of the NRNs' ability to support the development of exchanges between the farming community, researchers, advisers, training and educational bodies.

A particular focus was the dissemination of basic information about the OGs that have been selected so far. We investigated the reporting requirements on the output of EIP projects and how the flow of information and knowledge to, from and between OGs is organised and animated via the NRNs and transferred to the EU-level EIP network.

We based these analyses on data collected for the evaluation, notably a document review covering all Member States, the case studies (which included an analysis of EIP related elements in the NRN definition and implementation), and the results of the online survey and case study interviews of EIP stakeholders.

The second step to answer this evaluation question consisted of assessing whether the costs associated with dealing with NRNs are justified considering the knowledge, synergies with EU level innovation programme and EIP network and innovation support services benefits that were found.

Judgment criteria and indicators

Evaluation Question 4 is answered with the help of indicators presented in the table below. The defined judgement criteria specify the success of programme interventions and link EQ4 with several indicators measured based on qualitative and documentary evidence.

Table 14: Judgement criteria and indicators for Evaluation Question 4

EQ 4: To what extent is the National Rural Networks' design and operation with regard to innovation:	Judgement criteria	Indicators
<p>4.1 - adequate for achieving the aim set out in point (d) of Article 54(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which activities, services and tools offered by the NRNs are suitable for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - engaging the relevant innovation actors in the country including farmers, as well as researchers, educational or training bodies and rural actors facing practical needs - informing about innovation-related actions in the country and abroad - favouring exchanges among the farming community, advisors, rural actors and the research community - disseminating OG results • Extent to which innovative farmers and other rural actors build on the knowledge and innovation good practices disseminated through the NRNs • Extent to which the NRNs support the provision of innovation advice and expertise to potential OGs and their partners • Extent to which there are clear links and synergies between the NRNs and 	<p>Documentary evidence and stakeholders' views suggest that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant innovation actors in the different countries are aware of the existence of NRNs and make use of the services and tools they offer for supporting innovation actions • Key information about innovation actions in the different countries is disseminated through the NRNs (including information on the results of OGs) to local actors in attractive ways (format, language) • NRNs have contributed to an increased dialogue between the farming community, advisors, rural actors and the research community • NRNs have contributed to connections to H2020 actors and potential consortia • NRNs services and tools are instrumental for supporting the dissemination of OG results • Documentary evidence and stakeholders' views suggest that

EQ 4: To what extent is the National Rural Networks' design and operation with regard to innovation:	Judgement criteria	Indicators
	the EIP network at EU level	<p>NRNs support the development of OGs (e.g. by providing information on calls for applications and administrative requirements for applications; collecting needs from the farming practice; sharing innovation good practices)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary evidence and stakeholders' views suggest that NRNs provide support to innovation brokers and innovation support services • Documentary evidence and stakeholder views suggest that there are links and synergies between the NRNs and EIP network at EU level
4.2 -efficient?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which the administrative and economic costs related to dealing with the NRNs are justified and proportionate given their contribution to the EIP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders' views on approximate amount of time/resources allocated by Managing Authorities, advisory services, (potential) OG partners and other stakeholders to sharing information with and working with the NRNs.

The ensuing sections go through each of the two sub-questions in turn, with a view to elaborating the findings for each of the indicators presented in the table.

3.4.2.1. Adequacy of the NRNs' design and operation for fostering innovation and achieving the aims of the EIP

The adequacy of the NRNs for fostering innovation in agriculture, food production, forestry and rural areas and achieving the aims of the EIP requires several conditions to be fulfilled. Article 54 explicits the tasks of the NRNs with regard to fostering innovation and the EIP: (1) raising awareness, (2) networking advisors and innovation support services, (3) partner search for OGs, and (4) collecting and disseminating good examples.

First of all, NRNs' roles and actions need to be visible to and understood by rural innovation stakeholders. NRNs may provide different types of services and tools that are of interest as regards the EIP implementation, but these need to be accessible to these stakeholders. Moreover, key information about innovation actions in the different countries / regions has

to be effectively disseminated through NRNs, contributing to an increased dialogue between the different stakeholders. The extent to which NRNs' services and tools are instrumental for supporting the development and dissemination of OG results and the links and synergies established with the EIP network at EU level are also important factors to consider. In the following section, we analyse these factors in greater depth with a view to assessing the adequacy of NRNs for supporting the EIP.

Documentary evidence and stakeholders' views suggest that relevant innovation actors in the different countries are aware of the existence of NRNs and make use of its services and tools

The evidence collected indicates that **while most relevant stakeholders are aware of the existence of NRNs, their role in supporting EIP is still unclear**. However, this seems indicative more of the early stage of EIP implementation than of shortcomings specific to the NRNs.

The results of the online survey disseminated to key EIP stakeholders show that **the majority of respondents are indeed aware of the existence of the NRN in their country**. Over a third of these respondents have dealt with it directly (34%) while 30% have a good knowledge of the NRN activities although they have not dealt with it directly so far.

Among the different EIP stakeholders, government authorities (national, regional and local authorities) are the most familiarised with NRNs and a majority have dealt with these networks directly (60%). Agricultural and forestry advisors also have a significant level of awareness (31% have dealt with a NRN directly and 41% at least know of their activities). Researchers show lower levels of awareness, and 24% of respondents from this group do not know it at all. Regarding other groups (farmers, forest managers, NGOs and agri-business representatives), the number of respondents to the online survey was too low for responses to be analysed separately.

The case studies confirm the online survey results. Indeed, they suggest that the **NRN is known by most EIP stakeholders, but its action plan is still not very visible to innovation actors in several countries and regions** (mostly because in many Member States NRNs have been defined and adopted only recently).

For instance, in Flanders (Belgium), Rhône-Alpes (France), Basque Country, Catalonia and Andalusia (Spain), Sweden and the United Kingdom, the majority of **interviewed innovation actors indicated that they do not have a clear vision of the activity of NRNs and how they function**. It is understood that one of the goals of NRNs is to accelerate innovation in agriculture and rural areas, but how this aim will be pursued is not clear yet. Innovation actors' engagement with regard to the NRN in their respective countries is still low and there is sometimes a lack of clarity over the NRN's purpose. In a few countries (notably Bulgaria and Greece), this uncertainty is due to the fact that the exact role of the NRN is still to be determined.

Documentary evidence and stakeholders' views suggest that key information about innovation actions is disseminated through the NRNs

Regarding the dissemination of relevant information, NRNs' achievements vary between Member States depending on the state of implementation of NRNs' action plans. In the 2014-2020 programming period, it is clear that NRNs **plan to provide key information about innovation actions to local actors**. In countries where the NRN is already active, such information is indeed being disseminated already.

The results of the NRN mapping survey carried out among NSUs during early 2015⁸⁵ show that the most common change identified (mentioned by 12 NSUs) is that NSUs have started to integrate innovation (and support to advisory services) as new activities, with special focus on coordination with EIP.

Our research (documentary analysis, case study interviews) confirm that most NRNs' action plans foresee to disseminate key information about innovation measures through different channels (publication of information on the NRN website or creation of a new webpage on Innovation, management of an electronic information system database, facilitation of meetings and seminars, among others), sometimes including the translation of documents or information in the national language. The examples below, although not exhaustive, illustrate this:

- In Flanders (Belgium), key information about innovation actions will be disseminated through a special rubric dedicated to innovation on its website and a new entity called the Flemish EIP Network (made up of the FRN and the RDP MA) has been established to ensure the promotion and incentives for the EIP measures and other innovative elements within the RDP.
- In Bulgaria, the NRN is expected to participate in the elaboration and implementation of key information activities and the Coordination Network for Innovation (that will be run by the management unit of the NRN) is expected to build and maintain an electronic information system database, storing the results and achievements in agricultural innovation.
- In Croatia, the NRN plans to promote the EIP, including a new webpage to provide information about the initiative. The expected dissemination role of the NRN also includes the translation of abstracts from OGs in other countries which may be of particular interest to OGs in Croatia.
- In Italy, the biennial programme of the NRN contains a description of the NRN's main activities, including the communication and dissemination of information concerning the EIP initiative and Horizon 2020, the organisation of support activities, animation activities and connection between innovation policies, as well as the promotion of innovations and good business practices related to innovation. This first biennial programme also mentions that Italy's NRN is expected to translate official documents and working material in order to improve the implementation of EIP. It will support the dissemination of the outcomes of conferences, seminars, etc. organised by DG AGRI and the EU EIP-Network and – if necessary – work on their translation to make them accessible to Italian readers.
- In Germany, where the NRN is already very active, the national EIP support unit⁸⁶ (DVS "Deutsche Vernetzungsstelle Ländliche Räume") is responsible for the facilitation of seminars to inform potential actors about EIP opportunities. The DVS indeed organised first national information events in 2013 and participated in launching similar meetings at the regional level.

⁸⁵ NSUs received a questionnaire (see Annex I) and were contacted by the ENRD Contact Point to follow up or discuss written answers further. Results of the analysis and synthesis of the outcomes of individual rural network questionnaires and interviews were provided in the 1st NRN Mapping Report 2014-2020. The draft report was circulated prior to the 2nd NRN meeting in Latvia (12 May 2015) and the main findings presented during the meeting: "Starting-up the NSUs: The state-of-play of National Rural Networks & Network Support Units", European Network for Rural Development, May 2015.

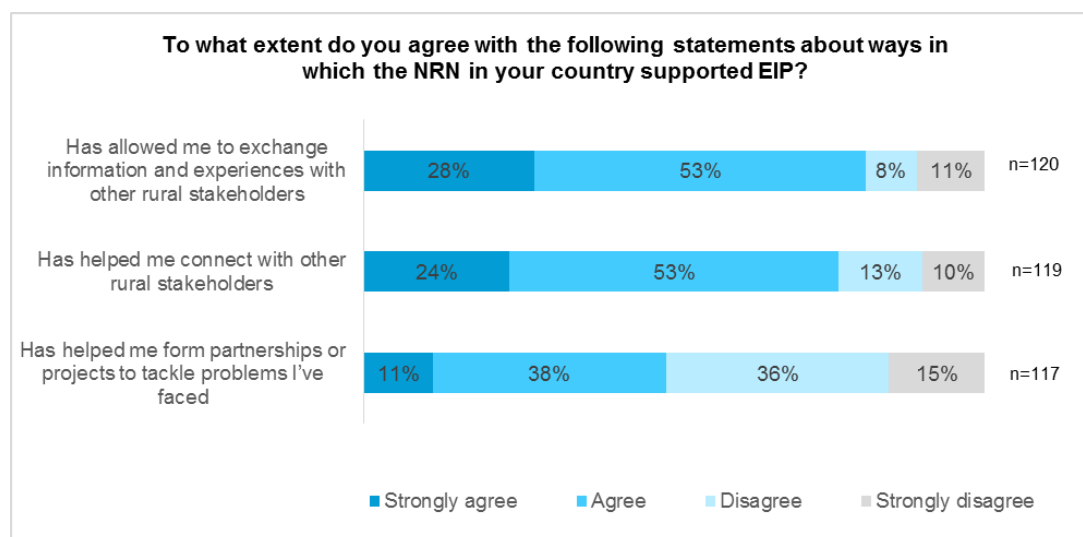
⁸⁶ Part of the NRN

Documentary evidence and stakeholders’ views suggest that NRNs have contributed to an increased dialogue between the farming community, advisors, rural actors and the research community

The online survey and case studies indicate that **NRNs can potentially contribute to an increased dialogue and stronger links** between the farming community, advisors, rural actors and the research community. As the majority of NRNs are at an early stage of implementation, it is not possible to assess fully the extent to which this has happened already.

The results of the online survey disseminated to key EIP stakeholders show that respondents who have a high level of knowledge of NRNs i.e. those who have dealt with an NRN directly (128) (36% of total respondents; 370) agree that the **NRN in their country has contributed to support the EIP by facilitating exchange of information and experiences with other rural stakeholders and by supporting rural stakeholders’ connection with each other**. Over 80% of respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with the first statement (81%) and 77% with the second one. However, there were **mixed reactions regarding the extent to which the NRN has helped them to form partnerships or projects** to tackle problems they have faced. In this case, responses were evenly distributed among those who thought it did help (49% “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with this) and those who thought it did not (51% “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with this). The results are illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 9: Online survey - Ways in which the NRNs have supported EIP



Although NRNs are mostly at an early stage of implementation of their action plans, most stakeholders interviewed during the case study investigations indeed confirmed that NRNs have a key role to play in **connecting and supporting links between entrepreneurs, advisors, researchers, professional organisations, innovation actors and others who are interested in getting involved in an innovation group**, both to conduct networking activities and/or to contribute to the search for partners for OGs (with a view to a specific project). For instance:

- The NRN in Poland, through its dedicated Agricultural and Rural Innovation Network (which is an independent part of the NRN), is considered a key instrument in terms of **networking actions** among farmers, entrepreneurs, R&D units and advisors.
- In Italy, the NRN plans to organise national Focus Groups (following the model of Focus Groups organised by the EU-level EIP network), i.e. mostly thematic workshops on topics that are particularly interesting for Italy (extensive livestock farming, viticulture, valorisation of waste and residues). Yet, given that the NRN started its activities only recently (its programme was only officially adopted in July

2015), stakeholders' feedback suggests that evidence of enhanced connection and collaboration amongst rural actors is still limited.

- In Sweden, similarly, the Swedish NRN (through the Swedish innovation network hosted by the NRN) is seen as a major tool to connect relevant innovation actors.

Although all NRNs play a role (or are expected to do so at some point) in connecting innovation actors generally, only some of them are explicitly tasked to help in the **search for partners for specific EIP projects**. The latter include the Polish and Italian NRNs. The Polish Agricultural and Rural Innovation Network (part of NRN) maintains a database of potential OG partners with over 2,000 organisations registered to date. The Italian NRN webpage includes a forum called "partners market" dedicated to searching for partners and OGs.

In other Member States, although the NRNs are considered channels for connecting the farming community, the extent to which they (successfully) contribute to partner search activities for specific EIP projects remains uncertain. For instance, in England and Scotland, NRNs aim to be informal innovation brokers, contributing to connecting innovation actors (farmers, researchers, advisors, NGO's, etc.). Yet, there are some concerns with the reach of NRNs amongst target audiences, and farmers in particular.

In some other regions or Member States, the NRN is seen as one amongst other networks that can serve to:

1) Connect rural innovation stakeholders in general:

- In effect, stakeholders interviewed in the three Spanish regions covered by the case studies (Andalusia, Catalonia and Basque Country) were more concerned with the development of their own regional networks and by the role that the EIP initiative will have within these networks than by the NRN.
- Similarly, in Rhône-Alpes region (France), the implementation of the EIP is supported by the establishment of a new partnership for Research, Innovation and Development (AGRI RID) that complements the Regional Rural Network and gathers all regional stakeholders involved in research, education and agricultural development. Besides, the Rhône-Alpes region chose to implement the EIP with strong relations to other existing frameworks (research programme PSDR4 and experimentation centres "Pôle d'Expérimentation et de Progrès - PEP", notably), which is seen locally as a clear asset favouring links between research and farmers.

2) Facilitate or ensure partner search for specific OGs:

- In Italy, besides the NRN, major farmers' organizations (Coldiretti for instance) already provide significant support to the search for OG partners.
- In Croatia, the advisory service system contributes to identifying partners from business and the research community, providing assistance in matching potential OGs partners.
- In Brittany (France), support for establishing OG partnerships has been provided by innovation brokers. For instance, an independent and specialised organisation called "Pôle Agronomique de l'Ouest - PAO" (West Agronomic Centre) led a consultation among a wide range of stakeholders to search for potential partners interested in the topic of protein self-sufficiency.

Documentary evidence and stakeholders' views suggest that NRNs have contributed to connections to H2020 actors and potential consortia

The connections to H2020 actors and potential consortia appear to be only weakly developed so far. How OGs link through to other EU level R&D and innovation actions such as H2020 remains unclear. For example, there is currently no active partner search function at EU level on the EIP website. Although potential H2020 project consortia may be seeking partners, the active support from NRNs, ENRD and EIP is still limited as not many OGs are selected and fully in action yet. Although NRNs foreseen actions include plans for linking EIP OGs to H2020, there is little evidence so far that NRNs will be able to foster such connections and consortia. This was confirmed during the case studies investigations in all regions and Member States:

- In France, links to Horizon 2020 have mostly remained theoretical at this stage. However, it should be noted that one of the first OGs from which a Thematic Network originated is an OG from the French region Midi-Pyrénées (Robustagneau-TN Sheepnet)
- In Germany, while the national EIP support unit (within the NRN) should play a major role linking partners and themes of OGs to H2020 and other EU innovation programmes, there is no evidence yet to show this in practice.
- Interviewed stakeholders in Greece raised open questions about such issue as whether and how links would be generated between OGs and H2020 projects.
- In Italy, links to H2020 had not been extensively explored by the MA and NRN or other stakeholders at this stage, making it difficult to ascertain how likely they would be to bear out in practice.
- This is as well the conclusion in Poland where synergies with H2020 have not been clearly articulated and are hard to gauge at this stage.
- In Spain, the EIP and other public funding like H2020 are perceived to fit with two different frameworks: the added-value of the EIP is perceived to be the close links with production and the flexibility of the topics that can be covered, whereas H2020 projects are considered to be broader and not designed for SMEs and/or farmers.
- In Sweden, although there seem to be strong coherence on paper between both policies, on a practical level, there are uncertainties about how the connection between Horizon 2020 and regional programming such as the EIP, will function.
- Across all three countries in the UK, there appears to be weak external coherence to wider (non-farming specific) innovation programmes in the UK and EU, including H2020

Documentary evidence and stakeholders' views suggest that NRNs services and tools are instrumental for supporting OGs results' dissemination

In most Member States, rural innovation stakeholders consider that the **NRN will play an important role in publicity and dissemination of the results and findings from OGs**. In effect, NRNs have plans for collecting examples of projects and good practices, and organise training and networking actions for the dissemination of findings. They will provide information materials and publications on innovative solutions developed through successful projects under the EIP in the corresponding country and in other Member States.

Several relevant tools and services have already been developed or will be developed shortly by NRNs. These include: electronic information system database reporting OGs results and partners, communication actions (online publication of information on OGs results and outputs), and provision of translation capacities to share abstracts of OGs from

other Member States. The main channels used for the dissemination of EIP findings by NRNs are the **NRNs websites, newsletters, social networks and media** (e.g. Twitter). Below, we provide examples of how these tools and services are being implemented in different countries / regions:

- In Germany, the national EIP support unit within the NRN has put in place an **open-access database** gathering the main outputs and results of OGs.
- In Poland, the Agricultural and Rural Innovation Network (SIR) within the NRN, is reportedly working towards creating a shared '**virtual office**' with the Regional Rural Advisory Centres for results dissemination purposes.

Similarly, in several other Member States, the NRN aims to disseminate OG results through **demonstration activities, by setting-up experimental farms that specialise in the development of new crops and techniques, and/or through professional training for farmers**. In other cases, the NRN will translate abstracts from OGs in other Member States' languages that are of particular interest for OGs in their country, to promote their dissemination. However, it is clear that, considering the number of OGs proposed across the EU, the lack of resources to deliver translations and the diversity of potential languages to cover, the dissemination of results from foreign OGs will remain a challenge.

In general terms, the success of the NRN is seen by some stakeholders as mostly linked to its ability to help disseminate EIP and innovative projects results. As illustrated above, there is no shortage of plans for doing so. However, given that both NRNs and OGs are in an early phase of implementation, it is not possible to determine yet whether NRNs' tools and services are adequate for supporting the dissemination of OGs results.

Documentary evidence and stakeholders' views suggest that NRNs support the development of OGs

Based on evidence collected during the case studies, **NRNs can play very different roles regarding the development of OGs, depending on EIP implementation choices made in each Member State**. Whereas in a number of countries / regions, NRNs play a key role in increasing rural stakeholders' level of knowledge of EIP opportunities (including the formation of OGs), in others this role is played primarily by other national / regional actors (e.g. different government bodies).

For example, in Bulgaria, the stakeholders interviewed considered that the NRN will be important for instilling trust in EIP and generating the conditions to encourage participation of farmers in activities such as OGs. In Croatia, the NRN has already facilitated a series of explanatory meetings dedicated to potential participants of OGs. In other Member States (e.g. Italy, Sweden, UK), the NRN provides methodological documents such as guidance on the OG application process, assists potential OGs members in getting the proposal ready for a formal application, helps establish contacts between relevant actors, and even provides subject matter expertise.

On the contrary, in other Member States / regions this supportive role to the development of OGs is played by other national or regional actors and the NRN is not directly in contact with potential OGs. Some examples of this are provided below:

- In Croatia, the administrative support and information on calls for proposals to potential OGs will be mostly provided by the Paying Agency. Furthermore, the assistance as regards technical aspects of applications will be provided by the Agricultural Advisory Service. The NRN in Croatia will only bring complementary support so as to reach the widest audience possible, i.e. communication and networking support.
- Similarly, in the case of the RDP of England, technical assistance to the development of OGs is mostly provided by Rural Payments Agency staff. At the UK national level,

the NRN has so far provided some support to applicants for OG status during the first round of applications, but this was not officially designated as innovation support and it is not meant to provide such support in the next selection rounds. Potential applications are expected to draw on their own support networks, at a local, regional and national level. Moreover, there are several research institutes in England that are very active in this area, and well linked in to various networks, giving them access to innovative businesses, farmers and consultants.

- In Germany, the activities of the National Support Unit for the EIP, within the NRN, are not directly linked to OGs. All the support to OGs seeking to facilitate both their setting-up and the implementation of their cooperative pilot projects is provided by ad hoc innovation brokers / facilitators. Indeed, there are innovation facilitators in 11 out of the 12 *Länder* to help potential beneficiaries deal with the administrative requirements of applications, increase the quality and innovative nature of their projects and coordinates applications.
- In Italy, most of the formal support for applicants and OGs is provided by MAs themselves, without any further support from the NRN or innovation support services.

Documentary evidence and stakeholders' views suggest that NRNs provide support to innovation brokers and innovation support services

The NRNs' provision of support to innovation brokers varies from one Member State to the other. In several Member States, the NRNs are expected to play a role in the emergence of innovation brokers: in Greece, innovation brokers are expected to come from an NRN innovation sub-network; in France as well, the NRN is responsible for the monitoring of innovation projects in progress, the facilitation of thematic focus groups that should help all actors involved including innovation brokers.

In the Member States where the activities of the NRN are not directly linked to OGs, like in Germany, the role of the National Support Unit within the NRN is precisely to provide support to regional ad hoc innovation facilitators which are then connected to OGs (compared to NRNs which are mostly providing support to the development OGs). In Wales the government is separately funding innovation brokers to help OGs develop their proposals and then to assist OGs in facilitating their project delivery.

Documentary evidence and stakeholders' views suggest that there are links and synergies between the NRNs and EIP network

Links and synergies between NRNs and the EIP network are in an early stage of development. The setting-up and management of both NRNs and the EIP network provide **adequate pre-conditions for them to work together effectively**. But, in practice, there is still little evidence showing how and to what extent these links and synergies will develop in the future.

More specifically, the general description of the design and management of the EIP network suggests that there are links and synergies with NRNs. For example, the EIP network's Annual Work Programmes specify the activities and services that will be provided throughout the year and include activities linking and seeking synergies with NRNs (as well as with the ENRD). As explained in section 3.4.1, the EIP network and NRNs are also linked through the Rural Networks' Assembly, which is formed by NRNs representatives, as well as governmental representatives, civil society organisations, and research institutions.

This is further supported by the services the EIP network is expected to deliver, including:

- Easy access to the Service Point through the website and with direct phone or email contacts for any question or request from NRNs;

- Possible participation of NRNs in Focus Groups, workshops, seminars;
- Access and contribution of NRNs to the EIP web database especially reporting on outputs and results of OGs in the EU; and
- Access to a wide range of publications, factsheets, articles which can then be disseminated at national/regional level providing that translation capacity is available.

According to the case studies, it appears that, in practice, the main links between NRNs and the EIP network are through the EIP web database. A large number of NRN stakeholders were aware of the EIP network and have also had some contact with it already, for example, have attended events across the EU to foster synergies between the national and EU level networks.

However, our case study research suggests that it is too early to tell what further interactions and links will be established. Stakeholders in Spain and Sweden confirmed that the specific role of their NRNs in the EIP network is still developing, and that the extent to which members of the NRNs will participate in the EIP network remains unknown.

An interesting initiative of the Italian NRN is a good example of a NRN taking the initiative to link its stakeholders with other regions and Member States. Alongside the organisation of a workshop in Italy which aimed to share first experiences of implementing the EIP⁸⁷ at EU level, the NRN in Italy decided to provide financial support to encourage regional and national stakeholders to participate in this event. By doing so, the NRN created an incentive for Italian stakeholders (especially regional Managing Authorities) to participate in the discussions developed by the EU-level EIP network. This can be seen as an example of synergies between the NRN and EU-wide EIP network to promote an effective and efficient implementation of the EIP initiative.

Main findings for sub-question 4.1

Given the early stage of implementation of the EIP and RDPs, it is not yet possible to draw definitive conclusions on the effectiveness of the NRNs in fostering innovation in agriculture and supporting the implementation of EIP across Europe.

Most stakeholders interviewed agreed that NRNs have so far contributed to supporting the EIP by facilitating rural stakeholders' connection with each other. Similarly, NRNs are widely expected to have an important role in publicity and dissemination of results and findings from OGs. The NRNs plan to develop and implement a diverse set of actions including, for example, provision of an open-access database gathering OGs main outputs and results, creation of a 'virtual office', dissemination of EIP through NRNs websites, newsletters, social networks and media (twitter), etc.

But there are still significant discrepancies between the development of NRNs across countries / regions, partly because in some places the implementation of NRNs' action plans and of the EIP as a whole are still at an early stage. There are also differences in terms of NRNs' intervention strategies as regards the EIP.

In effect, depending on EIP implementation choices made in each Member State, the NRNs can play very different roles regarding the development of OGs. In some Member States or regions, the NRNs provide methodological documents such as guidance on the OG application process, assist potential OGs in understanding the administrative requirements of their application, help establish contacts between relevant actors, and even provide

⁸⁷ EIP workshop "Operational Groups: First Experiences" organized in Legnaro (Veneto) in April 2016

subject matter expertise. In other Member States this supportive role to facilitate the development of OGs is played by other national or regional actors.

In addition, it appears so far that the main links between NRNs and the EU-level EIP network will be through the EIP web database. The majority of stakeholders from NRNs have had some contact with the EIP network already and have attended events across the EU aimed at contributing to increased synergies between the national and EU level networks. However, our case studies suggest that it is too early to tell what further interactions and links will be established.

Although it is perceived as a major need, there is little evidence that NRNs will be able and willing to foster connections to H2020 actors and potential consortia.

3.4.2.2. Efficiency of the NRNs' design and operation for achieving the aims of the EIP

In this section we examine the views of stakeholders and key informants on the efficiency of NRNs. In particular, we will look into the **approximate amount of time/resources allocated by MAs, advisory services, OG partners and other stakeholders to sharing information with and working with the NRNs**

The fact that NRNs are not yet active in several Member States is considered by interviewed stakeholders as a major issue that may adversely affect the effectiveness of the EIP implementation in these countries. The lack of provision of NRN services is considered to be likely to hinder the creation of OGs and to jeopardise the potential of the initiative in the Member States where the NRN is not active. For instance, in Bulgaria, there is currently no NRN and stakeholders suggest that this diminishes the potential of the initiative for the time being and adds to the importance of the role to be played by the MAs in the meantime.

This accounts for the relevance and importance of NRNs' contribution to the EIP implementation, especially as regards:

- The promotion of the EIP initiative, provision of links between rural and innovation stakeholders
- The dissemination of OGs results
- Links and synergies with the EIP network
- The provision of support (depending on each region / Member State choices) to MAs, innovation brokers and facilitators as well as to (potential) OGs

In view of the uneven situation across and lack of progress in some Member States, it is currently not possible to comment on the efficiency of the NRNs' role in supporting the EIP. To compare the effectiveness of the NRNs EIP-related contributions with associated costs (amount of time and resources allocated to sharing information with and working with the NRNs), we suggest to collect additional data from the next 2016 Annual Implementation Reports (especially AIRs related to the NRNs Operational Programmes) provided by all Managing Authorities to the EC by the end of June 2016.

Main findings in sub-question 4.2

Given that there is only one indicator for this sub-question, its main findings are already summarised in the foregoing texts.

3.4.2.3. Evaluation judgement

This evaluation examined the extent to which the **National Rural Networks' design and operation with regard to innovation** are adequate for achieving the aims of the EIP, as

well as efficient. While the precise role and activities of the NRNs / RRNs vary between Member States and regions, as per the intervention logic they are typically expected to spread awareness of the EIP, facilitate partner searches for OGs and provide a networking function to connect relevant stakeholders and innovation support services.

Because EIP implementation is only getting started in many countries and regions, **evidence was not available to draw robust conclusions** on the awareness of NRNs' / RRNs' EIP-related activities or their usefulness so far. Nonetheless, the available data suggest that where the NRNs / RRNs have been active, they have been strongly involved in the activities described above and thereby promoting the uptake of the EIP and increasing its chances of success.

We found that most of the *active* NRNs / RRNs have contributed to **informing stakeholders about EIP opportunities and encouraging buy-in**. This reflects a change to how NRNs / RRNs are being implemented compared with the previous funding period. Specifically, National Support Units have started to integrate innovation (and support to advisory services) as new activities, with a special focus on coordination with the EIP. In this way, NRNs / RRNs have helped the EIP gain traction and get off to a good start by helping rural stakeholders to make connections with each other.

However, in some countries and regions the NRN / RRN has **not been highly visible** to relevant stakeholders. Even when actors are aware of the existence of the network, there is sometimes a lack of clarity about its purpose, leading to confusion. In several Member States it appears that NRNs are inactive altogether, leading to concerns about how the EIP will be implemented in these Member States and regions.

Depending on EIP implementation choices made in each Member State / region, the NRNs / RRNs also contribute to the **establishment of OGs**. In some (but not all) Member States / regions, the NRN publishes methodological documents such as guidance on the OG application process, assists potential OGs in understanding administrative requirements of their application, helps establish contacts between relevant actors, and even provides subject matter expertise.

Looking further ahead, NRNs / RRNs are also **expected to have an important role in publicising and disseminating the results** of OGs and helping ensure follow-up. While it is too early to assess their success in this, they envisage a wide range of activities such as the provision of an open-access database gathering OGs' main outputs and results, the creation of a 'virtual office', dissemination of information through NRN / RRN websites, newsletters, social networks and media (twitter), the facilitation of demonstration activities, setting-up of experimental farms and more. However, a **lack of clear EIP-related activity plans** raises concerns about how many NRNs / RRNs will do this in practical terms.

NRNs / RRNs should be important **multipliers** for translating EIP materials produced at EU level and disseminating the results of activities conducted by the EIP network (i.e. Focus Groups, workshops and seminars). The majority of NRNs / RRNs have had some contact with the EIP network and attended events organised by it. Many are also clearly fulfilling their multiplier role, as (among other things) the availability of some translated materials on the EIP website demonstrates. But others still do not have plans in place that show how this will happen in practice. Similarly, there is little evidence about how NRNs / RRNs will foster connections between the EIP and Horizon 2020 and other EU programmes.

In terms of **value for money**, the NRNs / RRNs are essential to the success of the EIP. It was not possible to quantify the relevant costs of the NRNs / RRNs, but the time rural stakeholders have spent dealing with them seems to pale in comparison to the (potential) benefits described above.

3.5. Theme 4 – External coherence of the EIP with other policies

3.5.1. Introduction

This section presents our findings with regard to the external coherence of the EIP with other (EU level) policies, including the Europe 2020 Strategy, Horizon 2020, Environmental policy and Regional Policy.

EQ 5: To what extent is the EIP complementary and coherent with other policies, namely:

5.1 – Europe 2020 Strategy

5.2 – Horizon 2020

5.3 – Environmental policy

5.4 – Regional policy

Definition of key terms

The **coherence and complementarity** of a public policy or instrument refers to the extent to which the intervention does not contradict and on the contrary reinforces other interventions with similar objectives. Such coherence and complementarity with other policies and programmes are important for EIP to generate systemic change and contribute to impact-level objectives such as increasing the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors. Section 2.3.2 describes these intended links in detail, as they relate to the following policies and programmes:

- **Europe 2020** is the European Union’s ten-year jobs and growth strategy. It was launched in 2010 to create the conditions for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Five headline targets have been agreed for the EU to achieve by the end of 2020 covering employment, R&D, climate change and energy sustainability, education, and fighting poverty and social inclusion.
- **Horizon 2020** is the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme with nearly €80 billion of funding available over seven years (2014 to 2020), in addition to the private investment that EU funding will attract. Its goal is to ensure Europe produces world-class science, removes barriers to innovation and makes it easier for the public and private sectors to work together in delivering innovation.
- The EU has some of the world's highest environmental standards. **Environmental policy** helps green the EU economy, protect nature, and safeguard the health and quality of life of people living in the EU.
- **Regional policy** is seen at the EU level as an integrated territorial approach that **encourages** regional cooperation and improves synergies with other policies for research, innovation and education, and a tool to speed up smart growth across the EU. Regional policy strongly relates to smart specialisation strategies that aim at helping regions to concentrate **resources** and efforts on a few key Research and Innovation priorities.

Understanding of the Evaluation Question

External coherence refers to the coherence of the implementation of the EIP choices with **other relevant strategies and instruments at regional, national and EU level**. Therefore, to test it, we will analyse EIP’s contributions to and links with innovation and

good practices transfer in the perspective of other strategies and policies with expected impacts on innovation in rural areas and in the agriculture, agri-food and forestry sectors⁸⁸.

In particular, we will first examine the extent to which the EIP, as it is programmed for in the RPDs, is likely to contribute to the Innovation Union commitments of the European Innovation Partnerships. Next, we propose to analyse the extent to which there are links between the EIP with other (EU level) policies, including Horizon 2020, Environmental and Regional Policies that are likely to result in added value for the different initiatives.

Judgement criteria

The table below presents the evaluation and sub-questions that relate to the assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency and added value of the EIP network. The middle and right columns contain (respectively) the judgement criteria and indicators used to frame the analysis.

Table 15: Judgement criteria and indicators for Evaluation Question 5

Theme 4: External coherence with other policies		
EQ 5: To what extent is the EIP complementary and coherent with other policies, namely:		
	Judgement criteria	Indicators
5.1 – Europe 2020 Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which EIP, as it is programmed for in the RPDs, is likely to contribute to the Innovation Union 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentary evidence and stakeholders' views to confirm that projects funded through the EIP are likely to contribute to Innovation Union commitments of the EIPs
5.2 – Horizon 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which there are links between EIP and Horizon 2020 and evidence of actions that are likely to result in added value for both initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentary evidence to confirm that relevant H2020 literature (i.e. regulations / calls for proposals / selection procedures / programming documents for multi-actor projects and thematic networks under Societal Challenge 2) refer explicitly to the EIP Documentary evidence (i.e. the EIP network database itself) to confirm that H2020 multi-actor projects and thematic networks use the common format for abstracts and feed into the EIP network database Stakeholders' views to establish whether OG beneficiaries intend to use the common format for abstracts and feed into the EIP network database

⁸⁸ These include Europe 2020 Strategy, Horizon 2020, macro-regional environmental strategies and European, national and regional policies including Smart Specialisation Strategies)

Theme 4: External coherence with other policies		
EQ 5: To what extent is the EIP complementary and coherent with other policies, namely:		
	Judgement criteria	Indicators
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentary evidence and stakeholders views to confirm that H2020 multi-actor projects and thematic networks have led / are providing innovative ideas to be explored by OGs
5.3 –Environmental policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which there are links between EIP the Life+ programme, particularly integrated projects, that results in added value for both initiatives Extent to which there are synergies in the objectives and projects funded by EIP and EU environmental policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentary evidence and stakeholders’ views to confirm that EIP (potential) OG beneficiaries are made aware of Life+ integrated project opportunities Documentary evidence and stakeholders’ views to identify any (potential) synergies between Life+ integrated projects and EIP OGs Number and proportion of running OGs that target environmental subjects or questions
5.4 –Regional policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which there are links between EIP and European Structural and Investment Funds other than EAFRD that are likely to result in added value, particularly with regard to investments through the Smart Specialisation Strategies aimed at the agricultural and forestry sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentary evidence and stakeholders’ views to confirm (potential) synergies between applied research projects funded through ERDF and EIP OGs

3.5.2. Complementarity and coherence of the EIP with the Europe 2020 Strategy

This first sub-question aims to explore the extent to which the EIP and the projects funded through this initiative are likely to contribute to the Innovation Union commitments of the European Innovation Partnerships. The answer to this sub-question builds on a review of legal and programming documents and progress reports available on Europe 2020 and the Innovation Union Flagship Initiative. In addition, evidence was also collected through interviews with representatives of EU bodies and findings from the case studies carried out as part of this evaluation.

Documentary evidence and stakeholders’ views on the extent to which projects funded through the EIP are likely to contribute to Innovation Union commitments of the EIPs

Europe 2020

“Europe 2020 – a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”⁸⁹ was proposed by the EC in March 2010, and subsequently discussed by the European Parliament and endorsed at the meetings of the European Council in March and June 2010, respectively. Framed by the deep financial and economic crisis in Europe at the time (which included lower growth and productivity levels than in many other developed countries), and drawing on the lessons learned from its predecessor⁹⁰, Europe 2020 was intended to provide a new impetus for the EU to “take charge of its future”, tackle its structural weaknesses, and thereby achieve sustainable growth. Crucially, Europe 2020 advocates a **growth model** that goes beyond simply increasing GDP. The aim is to improve the EU's competitiveness (“smart” growth) while maintaining its social market economy model (“inclusive” growth) and improving significantly its resource efficiency (“sustainable” growth).

The strategy was conceived as a partnership between the EU and its Member States. At the core lies a set of **five headline targets** that all Member States have signed up to achieve by 2020. These targets relate to the level of employment; research and development (R&D); climate change and energy; education; and the fight against poverty and social exclusion. The EU-level targets were translated into national targets for each Member State, reflecting their different baselines, situations and circumstances. In order to catalyse progress at EU level, the Commission launched **seven flagship initiatives**, which included specific objectives, actions and work programmes in areas identified as important levers for growth. Although the dimensions of growth are of course inter-related and mutually reinforcing, the flagship initiatives can be categorised as follows:

Table 16: The Commission’s seven flagship initiatives

Smart growth	Sustainable growth	Inclusive growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital agenda for Europe Innovation Union Youth on the move 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource efficient Europe An industrial policy for the globalisation era 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An agenda for new skills and jobs European platform against poverty

The Innovation Union Flagship Initiative

Innovation Union is one of the seven flagship initiatives under Europe 2020. It is based on the recognition that Europe’s ability to drive innovation in products, services, business and social processes and models is paramount to its competitiveness, growth and job creation. In its 2010 Communication launching the Innovation Union,⁹¹ the Commission emphasises that Europe “has no shortage of potential” for innovation, but that in order to remain competitive, it needs to decisively **tackle its weaknesses**, especially:

- Under-investment in research and development (R&D)
- Unsatisfactory framework conditions for innovation
- Too much fragmentation and duplication

⁸⁹ European Commission: Europe 2020 – a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. COM(2010) 2020 final

⁹⁰ The Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs, which was launched in 2000 and renewed in 2005

⁹¹ European Commission: Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative – Innovation Union. COM(2010) 546 final

To meet this challenge, the Innovation Union aims to introduce a more **strategic approach** to innovation. Innovation policy has been pursued in the EU and its Member States for many decades, but the Innovation Union aims to make innovation an overarching policy objective which is anchored at the highest political level and mainstreamed into a wide range of relevant policies and interventions, with a high degree of long-term planning and progress monitoring, and a better alignment of policies at the different levels.

To this end, Innovation Union put forward **34 concrete commitments** for the EU and/or Member States to take actions. These commitments fall under six broad thematic areas, namely:

1. **Strengthening the knowledge base and reducing fragmentation** (9 commitments): This area concerns primarily the generation of ideas through R&D, and includes actions to train and employ researchers, to create a genuinely unified European Research Area (ERA), to focus EU funding instruments on Innovation Union priorities, and to further promote the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT).
2. **Getting good ideas to market** (14 commitments): Generating ideas is only the first step in innovation – the second (and equally important) step is their commercialisation. For this purpose, Innovation Union proposes actions to enhance access to finance for innovative companies; create a single innovation market by addressing aspects such as patents, standard-setting, and public procurement; and foster openness and creativity.
3. **Maximising social and territorial cohesion** (5 commitments): Actions in this area aim to ensure that all of the EU benefits from innovation are shared among Member States, by using the Structural Funds to support all regions (and thereby avoid an “innovation divide”), and by fostering social innovation.
4. **Pooling forces to achieve breakthroughs** (1 commitment): Innovation Union proposes the launch of **European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs)** across the whole research and innovation chain to help deliver breakthroughs to address major societal challenges.
5. **Leveraging our policies externally** (3 commitments): This area introduces a global dimension, and proposes measures to attract and retain researchers from abroad, and to enhance scientific cooperation with third countries.
6. **Making it happen** (2 commitments): The final commitments concern support for the implementation of reforms at national level, and measuring progress based on appropriate tools and indicators.

European Innovation Partnerships

The European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs) are intended to **help create “new ecosystems” to foster innovation**, and achieve systemic change to achieve major breakthroughs. With the EIP approach, the EU hopes to break down silos, and operate across the entire innovation chain (involving both the supply and demand sides, including the public, private and third sector). The approach is challenge-driven, i.e. focuses on specific major societal challenges. Five EIPs were launched in 2011-2012, including the **EIP on Agricultural Sustainability and Productivity**. Rather than introducing new funding, they aim to streamline, simplify and better coordinate existing instruments and initiatives and complement them with new actions where necessary.

According to the latest Commission’s report on the State of the Innovation Union (2015), the EIPs were each conceived to have the first measurable outcomes within 1-3 years and headline targets to be achieved within 5-8 years (2020). They have all identified priorities and mobilised a wide range of stakeholders to accelerate the uptake of R&D and market deployment of innovations.

Table 17 – Innovation Union commitment 29: progress, key developments and challenges ahead

Commitment	Progress end 2015 ⁹²	Key developments	Challenges ahead
29. Pilot and present proposals for European Innovation Partnerships	On track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot EIP on Active & Healthy Ageing launched in May 2011 • Four more EIPs launched in 2012: 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability' and 'Raw Materials' (February 2012); 'Water' (May 2012); 'Smart Cities and Communities' (July 2012). • Since then, each EIP has reached the following milestones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Endorsement by Council ○ Delivery of Strategic Implementation Plan ○ Start of implementation, including 'Invitations/Calls for Commitments and Reference Sites', setting up of 'Action/Operational Groups' and execution of priority actions, web-based 'Marketplaces', annual EIP conferences etc. • Independent expert group report published Feb. 2014 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidation of a consistent and dedicated EIP structure, streamlining the approaches across different EIPs. • Greater transparency about selection criteria, targets and indicators is needed. • Greater clarity in communicating the EIP process and to proactively involve start-ups and disruptive innovators. • Development of an evaluation and monitoring framework.

The EIP

The EIP is expected to contribute to the Europe 2020 Innovation Union flagship initiative by **better linking agricultural research and farming**, thereby helping to shape an agricultural sector that can produce more with less. One of the key strengths of the EIP in helping to deliver on the Europe 2020 objectives is its potential to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship and promote inclusiveness.

⁹² Based on European Commission: State of the Innovation Union 2015

As evidenced in the table below, which outlines the aims and actions of the EIP as per Article 55 of the EIP Regulation, **innovation culture** is set out as a key priority of the initiative and foresees the development of a set of actions, including developing better linkages between research and farming practice and encouraging the wider use of available innovation measures, as well as promoting the transposition of innovative solutions into practice.

Table 18 – EIP’s aims and actions

Aims and actions	Overview
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote a resource efficient, economically viable, productive, competitive, low emission, climate friendly and resilient agricultural and forestry sector, working towards agro-ecological production systems and working in harmony with the essential natural resources on which farming and forestry depend • Help deliver a steady and sustainable supply of food, feed and biomaterials, including existing and new types • Improve processes to preserve the environment, adapt to climate change and mitigate it • Build bridges between cutting-edge research knowledge and technology and farmers, forest managers, rural communities, businesses, NGOs and advisory services
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating added value by better linking research and farming practice and encouraging the wider use of available innovation measures • Promoting the faster and wider transposition of innovative solutions into practice • Informing the scientific community about the research needs of farming practice.

EU-level interest groups consulted as part of the evaluation agreed that the concept of the EIP is highly relevant and is needed given the lack of connectivity between farmers and the research community. In their view, it is important that more farmers are involved in research and innovation but there is also a need to focus on changing the culture of researchers, many of whom are not used to working directly with farmers.

Given the early stages of the programme, it is difficult to say how much improvement the EIP will deliver in relation to its aims and priority actions. The shared view of those consulted suggests that initial indications are positive, particularly where a focus on practical projects has been adopted.

However, EU-level interviews and case study reports in the sample of selected RDPs call for a need to promote the EIP more effectively with stakeholders in the Member States and regions, particularly in relation to the dissemination of results. Innovation support is currently not strong enough in most Member States and the EIP is considered to have a key role to help address this gap through promoting more dissemination of research and innovation at the regional and/or national level.

At a broader level, the expected shift from science to innovation driven research through the EIP interactive innovation model has a strong potential for contributing to a cultural change, including a push for supporting the restructuring of the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) in Europe away from old paradigms based on linear approaches. The EIP participatory approach to innovation is gradually leading to more interaction between farmers, foresters, the agricultural industry, researchers, consultants and advisors in concrete initiatives, and is fostering an early engagement of stakeholders

in the development of projects and a continued involvement and a sense of co-ownership of results.

Main findings in sub-question 5.1

Agriculture is one of the five key areas included in the **EU's joined up approach to innovation and research** within the broader strategy for growth as defined by Europe 2020, the EU's growth strategy. The European Innovation Partnerships are a new approach to research and innovation. EIPs support the cooperation between research and innovation partners so that they are able to achieve better and faster results, with a focus on societal benefits and fast modernisation.

Available evidence suggests that the conditions have been established for the EIP and the projects funded through the initiative to contribute to Innovation Union commitments of the EIP. The Commission's latest report on the State of the Innovation Union (2015)⁹³ confirms that **initial provisions have been met with relative success**. However, it is still early in the process to analyse first measurable outcomes, as Operational Groups and projects are only starting to be selected and implemented in the RDPs that have programmed for the EIP.

However, the main challenge ahead is not just guaranteeing that projects funded contribute to Innovation Union commitments, but to go a step further to achieve **greater clarity in communicating the EIP process and outcomes and ultimately to accomplish a broader cultural change stimulating innovation from all sides** and supporting AKIS to adapt to changing contextual conditions and addressing new agricultural challenges. Given that only a small proportion of the 20 million farming businesses across the EU will be directly engaged in the EIP network through participation in OGs or other types of initiatives, there is a need to develop effective mechanisms to cascade the messages which emerge from the OGs, focus groups, events, H2020 funded projects, etc., to achieve the broader impacts that the initiative was set reaching out to accomplish.

3.5.3. Complementarity and coherence of the EIP with Horizon 2020

This second sub-question aims to explore the extent to which there are links between the EIP and Horizon 2020 and to identify evidence of actions that are likely to result in added value for both initiatives. In particular, the analysis examines documentary evidence, including legal and programming documents under Societal Challenge 2 of Horizon 2020 and the EIP network's database of projects, and stakeholders' views (i.e. online survey responses and case study reports), to understand the complementarity between both initiatives.

Documentary evidence confirming that relevant H2020 literature refer explicitly to the EIP

Horizon 2020 (H2020) is the EU's main vehicle for funding research collaboration between institutions in different Member States and further afield. Running from 2014 to 2020 with a budget of nearly €80 billion it is the largest ever envelope dedicated to supporting activity of this kind.

Both Rural Development Policy and H2020 aim at demand-driven innovation and complement each other in providing opportunities for OGs. Rural development

⁹³ State of the Innovation Union 2015, DG Research and Innovation, http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/pdf/state-of-the-union/2015/state_of_the_innovation_union_report_2015.pdf

programmes are applied within a specific country or region, while research policy co-funds innovative actions at transnational level. In order to be eligible for support under research policy, projects have to involve partners from at least 3 Member States, which encourages cross-border collaboration between partners in different regions.

As reflected in the table below, relevant H2020 strategic documents refer to the European Innovation Partnerships and to the EIP in particular.

Table 19 – The EIP in H2020 literature

H2020 strategic documents	References to the EIPs and the EIP
<p>Horizon 2020 - The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation - Communication from the Commission (COM/2011/0808)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A challenge-based approach will bring together resources and knowledge across different fields, technologies and disciplines, including social sciences and the humanities. This will cover activities from research to market with a new focus on innovation-related activities, such as piloting, demonstration, test-beds, and support for public procurement and market uptake. It will include establishing links with the activities of the EIPs (<i>Section 3 – Focusing Resources on Key Priorities</i>). • The EIPs will be tasked with tackling technical, legal and operational barriers to innovation in Europe, hereby establishing solid links between supply and demand side measures (<i>Section 5 – A broad and seamless approach to innovation</i>)
<p>Regulation (EU) No 1291/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing Horizon 2020 - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H2020 should contribute to the aims of the EIPs in line with the flagship initiative Innovation Union, bringing together all relevant actors across the whole research and innovation chain with a view to streamlining, simplifying and better coordinating instruments and initiatives (<i>Recital 21</i>) • External advice should be sought on a continuous basis during Horizon 2020, also making use of relevant structures such as ... the EIPs (<i>Recital 24</i>) • Full account shall also be taken of relevant aspects of the research and innovation agendas established by European Technology Platforms, Joint Programming Initiatives and EIPs (<i>Section 1, Article 12, External advice and societal engagement</i>) • Research and innovation will interface with a wide spectrum of Union policies and related targets, including the CAP (in particular the Rural Development Policy) and the EIP (<i>Part III – Societal Challenges – Societal Challenge 2</i>)
<p>Council Decision (2013/743/EU) establishing the specific programme implementing Horizon 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority setting for the funding of indirect actions under H2020 will take into account the strategic research agendas of European Technology Platforms or inputs from the EIPs (<i>Annex 1 – Common elements for indirect actions</i>) • Beyond the general sources of external advice, specific consultations will be sought from the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) on a range of issues, including on strategic aspects through its foresight activity and on the coordination of agricultural research between national and Union levels. Appropriate links will be established with the actions of the EIP (<i>Part III – Societal Challenges – Specific implementation actions</i>)

Source: Evaluation team, based on H2020 reference documents and proposals

H2020 has a budget of around €3.7 billion for the **Societal Challenge 2 on “Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine, maritime and inland water research and the bio-economy”** for 2014-2020. Through this societal challenge, Horizon 2020 aims to create solutions for problems which farmers and foresters currently face, and includes opportunities for funding projects where researchers and practitioners build solutions together.

The first Societal Challenge 2 Work Programme (2014-2015)

The first bi-annual **Societal Challenge 2 Work Programme (2014-2015)** was adopted in December 2013, when the EIP was still in its early stages. The first call (2014) was published in December 2013 and included 14 topics of interest to agriculture, food and forestry. The 2014 call resulted in the selection of 16 projects from a total of 185 that were submitted.

As reflected in the table below (and further developed in Annex A), the second call (2015) included twelve priorities of interest to agriculture, food and forestry, covering a broad variety of issues, under two different calls, Sustainable Food Security and Innovative, Sustainable and Inclusive Bio-economy. Seven out of the 12 relevant Horizon 2020 topics supported projects with a multi-actor approach, resulting in over 25 projects selected under the relevant 2015 calls. In addition, five thematic networks for a total of around €10 million were also selected for funding. The themes for the five networks were not pre-defined and could for instance be linked to sectors or products (e.g. arable crops, fruits, vegetables, pigs) or to a broad range of cross-cutting subjects such as crop rotation, certain farming practices, energy, eco-system services, implementation of a directive, social services, bio-based products, and short supply chains.

Table 20 – Agriculture and forestry related priorities in H2020 2015 call

Calls	Number of priorities	Overall indicative budget
Sustainable Food Security (SFS)	• 9 priorities	€ 72.5 million
Innovative, Sustainable and Inclusive Bio-economy (ISIB)	• 3 priorities	€ 19.5 million

The second Societal Challenge 2 Work Programme (2016-2017)

It is interesting to note that the EIP is significantly more present in the second bi-annual **Societal Challenge 2 Work Programme (2016-2017)**. In fact, a substantial proportion of the total budget of the work programme (€ 560 million out of € 877 million) is of direct interest to agriculture and forestry. In addition, the participative process that led to the adoption of the current work programme included consultations with EIP stakeholders. As part of the ‘strategic programming’ approach led by the Commission, which starts well in advance of the publication of the work programmes and aims at identifying key priorities and orientations at an early stage, a stakeholder consultation workshop was organised by DG AGRI in June 2014. The objective of the workshop, which brought together EIP stakeholders and organisations, was to collect the contributions of participants working together on identifying research and innovation needs related to practical problems faced on the ground. It also aimed at identifying priorities for future research activities to be funded under Horizon 2020 in the most relevant areas to the Common Agricultural Policy.

In the introduction to the work programme, there is a commitment to bring research and innovation to the heart of the major primary sectors, including agriculture and fisheries, to face the new challenges ahead. The work programme also introduces the interactive innovation approach, which, in alignment with the approach of the EIP, *“fosters the development of research into practical applications and the creation of new ideas thanks*

to interactions between actors, the sharing of knowledge and effective intermediation." ⁹⁴ The interactive innovation model is implemented in H2020 through multi-actor project topics, which – with a view to complementarity – are encouraged to connect with EIP Operational Groups that follow a similar approach.

In terms of the specific calls, topics and priorities under the Work Programme 2016-2017, the main opportunities for agriculture and forestry can be found in three main calls: Sustainable Food Security (SFS), Rural Renaissance (RUR), and Bio-based innovation (BB). Based on the experience of the previous calls, the current work programme has reinforced the focus on the need to involve innovation groups operating in the EIP context. The dissemination of project results has also been strengthened, namely through the requirement to produce common EIP format practice abstracts.

The table below presents an overview of the agriculture and forest related topics and priorities under each of the three calls, as well as the overall indicative budget and the overall grant size for projects under these priorities. As evidenced, the Sustainable Food Security call offers the largest number of topics and priorities and the largest indicative budget and grant size related to agriculture and forest topics. The Rural Renaissance follows next, and the Bio-based innovation call comes in third place. For reference, detailed tables providing the list of the different agriculture and forestry related priorities under each call, together with indicative budget, grant size and type of approach in each case, are presented in the Annex A (Theme 4).

Table 21 – Agriculture and forestry related priorities in H2020 2016-7 call

Calls	Nr of topics and priorities	Overall indicative budget	Overall grant size
Sustainable Food Security (SFS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 topics • 20 priorities 	€ 146.5 million	€ 117 million
Rural Renaissance (RUR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 topics • 8 priorities 	€ 66 million	€ 42 million
Bio-based innovation (BB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 topics • 3 priorities 	€ 12 million	€ 12 million

The evidence presented above suggests that a significant and growing amount of Horizon 2020 funding is available for agricultural and forestry research. In addition, the evidence points to a good fit, in terms of topics and approaches, between H2020 topics and priorities under Societal Challenge 2 and EIP priorities. The continued efforts to mainstream EIP priorities into the second bi-annual Work Programme 2016-2017 as part of the strategic programming approach undertaken in preparation for the work programme is a positive sign of the increased links between the programmes.

It should be also noted that, in parallel to the references to the EIP in the H2020 relevant work programmes, EIP Focus Groups results, which are expected to provide new and useful ideas to solve practical problems, have been directly instrumental in some cases to starting thematic networks. The **Short supply chain Knowledge and Innovation Network (SKIN)** provides a relevant example of ways in which Focus Groups have stimulated the creation of thematic networks. The thematic network, which was approved in June 2016, includes a number of members of the Focus Group on Short Food Chains (which ran during

⁹⁴ Societal Challenge 2 Work Programme (2016-2017), page 11

2014-15), and builds strongly on the findings of the Focus Group. Other thematic networks have a less direct link back to a predecessor Focus Group, e.g. the **Data Driven Dairy Decisions for Farmers (4D4F)** which works on precision farming based on sensor data. This thematic network was approved in November 2015, and its development drew on the reports and experience of some members of the Focus Group on Precision Livestock Farming.

The specific themes for the thematic networks are chosen by the project partners, focusing on needs identified by farmers, foresters or agribusinesses and working with the supply chain if necessary. Themes can be related to products or sectors, e.g. arable crops, fruits, vegetables, poultry, etc. or to subjects which are more cross-cutting, e.g. crop rotation, energy, implementation of certain EU directives, certain farming practices, short supply chains, etc.

Documentary evidence (i.e. the EIP network database itself) confirming that H2020 multi-actor projects and thematic networks use the common format for abstracts and feed into the EIP network database

The **EIP common format for practitioners** for informing and reporting on practical results consists of a set of basic elements representing each project and includes one or more practice abstract(s). The format was developed with two main objectives: (i) to enable contacting partners and stimulate efficient knowledge exchange; and (ii) to disseminate the results of the project in a concise and easy understandable way to practitioners.

Through the EIP network, the common format is expected to help connect OGs funded under Rural Development Policy with H2020 researchers as well as with projects / initiatives funded through other sources. In the longer term, the aim is to develop the EIP web database as a unique EU repository for projects which can have an impact in practice and as a one-stop-shop for practical knowledge sharing in agriculture.

The common format allows for the provision of information across the life-cycle of the project. The content of the common format can be updated at any moment when useful, for instance in an intermediate phase of the project. Project information should at least be available at the beginning (describing the situation at the start of the project, including project title and objectives) and at the end of the project (describing the results/recommendations resulting from the project, including a final project report and one or more practice abstracts). The following table lists the different elements (obligatory, recommended and optional) and fields that integrate the common format template.

Table 22 – The EIP common format for practitioners – structure

Elements	Description / fields
Obligatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title of the project (in native language and in English) • Editor of the text: person/ organisation responsible for delivering the text • Project coordinator (lead-partner) and project partners • Keyword-category (to be chosen from a pre-defined list of categories) • Project period (starting date, end date) • Project status: ongoing or completed • Main funding source (RDP, H2020, or other EU, national, regional, private) • Total budget of the project • Geographical location where the main activities take place: NUTS 3 level

Elements	Description / fields
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final report (as an annex), including a substantial description of the results - obligatory for completed projects – to be drafted according to specific requirements for the funding source • Practice "abstract": <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Objective of the project: relevant problems/opportunities addressed by the project, and how they will be solved ○ Short summary for practitioners on the (final or expected) outcomes, including: main results/outcomes, main practical recommendations
Recommended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of project activities in native language and in English • Short summary for practitioners • Audio-visual material for practitioners (e.g. YouTube link, videos, other) • Website of the project (URL) • Links to other website(s) hosting information on the project (results)
Optional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional practice abstracts • Description of the context of the project • Additional information on the project (e.g. for detailed monitoring) • Additional comments: free text field which can be used by the editor

An initial analysis of the EIP network database at the time of writing the report shows a total of **168 projects published** following the EIP common format for practitioners. The table below presents an overview of the projects published by project type and by main funding source. As evidenced by the numbers, a very small proportion of projects published following the EIP common format are Horizon 2020 funded projects (4 in total, out of an estimated total of 40 multi-actor projects and 10 thematic networks selected under the first two work programmes), and only two of them receive funding under Societal Challenge 2. The number of H2020 funded projects published in the EIP common format is expected to increase as the current work programme (2016-2017) has strengthened this requirement by calling all multi-actor projects to contribute to the EIP by producing practice abstracts respecting the EIP common format.

There are also very few practice abstracts from OGs published (5), including three from the UK (England and Scotland), one from France and one from Italy.

It is encouraging to see though that many research projects published on the EIP website have received other (public, national, regional) research funds (34) or were funded under the Seventh Framework Programme (21), predecessor to Horizon 2020. A number of research projects on the database are funded by other EU research funds, including LIFE+ (8).

More than half of the projects on the database are **innovative actions**, most of which are funded under national or regional rural development funds (60) or under the EU predecessor Rural Development Programme 2007 / 2013 (21). There are also some projects published on the EIP database funded under the current EU Rural Development Programme (2), or that receive private funding (7). There are also a few projects (6) that have not yet been funded.

It is expected that the increasing use of the EIP network database and of the EIP common format for practitioners will allow sharing the results and knowledge developed by Operational Groups, thematic networks and other types of projects with a view to benefitting the entire agricultural sector.

Table 23 – Number and type of projects published under the EIP common format for practitioners

Project type	Nr of projects published	Main funding source	Nr of projects published
Operational Group	5	Rural Development 2014-2020 for OGS	5
Research Project	67	Horizon 2020 (EU Research & Innovation)	4
		Previous EU Framework Programme (FP7)	21
		Other EU research funds	8
		Other (public, national, regional) research funds	34
Innovative Action	96	Rural Development 2014 / 2020	2
		Rural Development 2007 / 2013	21
		Other rural development funds	60
		Private funds	7
		Not yet funded	6
Total	168		168

Stakeholders' views to establish whether OG beneficiaries intend to use the common format for abstracts and feed into the EIP network database

The use of the common format for abstracts by EIP OGS, and the dissemination of these abstracts via the EIP network, is an important precondition to fostering the future complementarity between EIP and H2020. However, as argued below, the use of this mechanism has so far remained limited.

According to data retrieved from the consultations with Managing Authorities in the 94 RDPs programming for the EIP that was carried out as part of the evaluation, more than 100 projects had been selected until April 2016 for the set-up and implementation of Operational Groups. However, the number is likely to be higher as there is data missing for a number of RDPs, and there were a number of selection processes on-going or about to be launched.

Assuming an overall estimate of around 150 projects funded to date, a very small proportion of this total (circa 3%, five Operational Groups, see **Table 23** above) have been published on the EIP projects database using the common format for practitioners.

This low proportion may partly be a reflection of a lack of awareness of the EIP network and its project database. The results of the online survey with EIP stakeholders conducted as part of the evaluation indicate that awareness of the EU-level EIP network is low among those consulted. Asked to rate their levels of awareness of the EU EIP network, only one

in five respondents confirmed having dealt with the EIP network directly, and around a third (34%) confirmed being knowing of the network but not having dealt with it directly. Managing Authorities and advisors were among those most aware of the network, while researchers were the least aware.

Findings from the case studies reinforce the idea that the EU EIP network is not yet sufficiently consolidated and that stakeholders in the different countries and regions visited are currently more inclined to pursuing networking activities at regional and national levels. At this early stage of implementation of the initiative, it appears that stakeholders are less interested in exploring collaboration and networking opportunities at EU level. In general, the majority of farmers and other grassroots stakeholders consulted were not aware of how results would be disseminated at EU level.

The EIP website, which is meant to host and disseminate information on projects funded (among other things), is highly frequented by survey respondents who confirmed having dealt with the EIP network directly, but the shared view among those consulted in the country case studies is that the majority of farmers and grassroots stakeholders are not frequent users of the website. The main reasons cited for the low levels of awareness and use of the website include the limited language coverage and the fact that articles and reports are not written in an accessible way.

Producing easily digestible abstracts through a shared database on the EIP website is a promising start to the facilitation of knowledge exchange. But the success will be dependent on how widely used the database becomes and if it can prove its usefulness in practice (i.e. evidence of it working as envisioned). The results collected by the evaluation indicate that the common format for abstracts has only been put into practice by a very small number of OGs. The survey results support this finding: less than half of those respondents who frequently visit the website (7% of the total sample) have searched for information on on-going projects, and a slightly lower number have shared information for projects they are involved in. There are expectations across different countries and regions that the EU EIP network will facilitate the knowledge transfer and the dissemination of the results between participants across the EU. However, it is still too early to corroborate this given that OGs are only now starting to be selected and implemented.

Documentary evidence and stakeholders views to confirm that H2020 multi-actor projects and thematic networks have led / are providing innovative ideas to be explored by OGs

Within the societal challenge "Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime and inland water research and the bio-economy" of Horizon 2020, **thematic networks and multi-actor projects** are required to produce interactive and practice-oriented formats, which are expected to produce easily accessible end-user material that can be shared via the EIP network. The total budget available for all multi-actor projects and thematic networks in the first two H2020 work programmes amounts to approximately € 500 million.

Multi-actor projects require a close involvement of end-users and multipliers of research results (i.e. farmers and farmers' groups, advisors, enterprises and others), throughout the whole project period. This approach is expected to result in innovative solutions that are more likely to be applied in the field. The key feature of multi-actor projects is to address the needs, problems and opportunities of end-users and to generate the necessary interaction between researchers and end-users by attributing a clear role for the different actors in the work all along the project. This combination of practical and scientific knowledge should generate innovative solutions that are more likely to be applied thanks to cross-fertilisation of ideas between actors, the co-creation and the generation of co-ownership for eventual results.

Thematic networks are multi-actor projects that aim to mobilise all concerned actors on specific thematic areas. Their objective is to develop end-user material (i.e. info sheets, audio-visual material) for practitioners, to remain available beyond the projects and to be shared through the EIP network. Projects will synthesise and present best practices and research results with a focus on those which are ready to put in practice, but are not yet known by practitioners. The thematic networks funded by H2020 focus on Communication and Support Actions (CSA) to promote existing industry or research led innovation rather than researching new ideas.

Annex A (Theme 4) presents an overview of multi-actor projects and thematic networks funded under H2020 2014 and 2015 calls for proposals. The majority of projects (in particular those selected under the 2015 call) have only started earlier this year (between February and April 2016), so it is still too early to identify any results. However, an analysis of the descriptions of objectives for each projects on the CORDIS database (summarized in Annex A) suggests that all projects funded ate expected to provide innovative ideas that could potentially feed into the EIP process.

Regardless of the potential of each project to contribute innovative ideas to EIP, the findings from the case studies suggest that there is low awareness among EIP stakeholders (including Managing Authorities, National Rural Networks and grassroots stakeholders) of the potential connections that exist or that could be established with Horizon 2020. In particular, there was no evidence from the case studies to suggest that any of the OGs that have been formed to date were inspired directly or indirectly by H2020 multi-actor projects or thematic networks.

The stakeholder consultation workshop organised by DG AGRI as part of the strategic programming process in preparation of the 2016 - 2017 work programme was a very worthwhile exercise which had a clear impact on the resulting work programme, and which can help to connect projects and Operational Groups under both programmes. However, consultations with Managing Authorities indicate that the EIP is still very much an inward-looking initiative in its early stages, with a focus on the regional and national set-up and implementation processes, and less emphasis on and awareness of EU level activities. It is expected that with the consolidation of the process and the launch of more Operational Groups across the different countries and regions in Europe, opportunities for links with H2020 initiatives will be more visible through the EIP EU-level network.

Main findings in sub-question 5.2

With nearly €80 billion of funding available between 2014 and 2020, Horizon 2020 is the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme ever implemented, and the financial instrument executing the Innovation Union. Around 5% of the overall budget (€3.7 billion) has been allocated for the **Societal Challenge 2 on "Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine, maritime and inland water research and the bio-economy"**, which aims to create solutions for problems in the agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture sectors, as well as in the bio-based industries.

The evidence presented above indicates **strong links and a solid basis for potential collaboration** between the EIP and H2020. The analysis confirmed a good alignment between topics, priorities and approaches covered under the two initiatives, in particular in the second (and current) bi-annual Work Programme 2016-2017, which incorporated agricultural and forestry priorities as part of the strategic programming approach undertaken during the design of the work programme. Another interesting element of complementarity is the transnational nature of H2020 co-funded actions, which contrasts with the predominantly national and regional outlook of funding under rural development programmes.

EIP Focus Groups in a few cases have been source of inspiration for starting thematic networks. Two of the objectives of Focus Groups – as stated in the charter – are to identify

needs from practice and propose directions for further research and to propose priorities for innovative actions by suggesting potential practical OGs or other project formats to test solutions and opportunities, including ways to disseminate the practical knowledge gathered. However, there are no formal links between Focus Groups and Thematic Networks: they fall under different funding policies and are subject to different selection procedures.

An analysis of the objectives of more than 20 projects (including multi-actor projects and thematic networks) selected for funding under Societal Challenge 2 of H2020 suggests that all of them are expected to provide **innovative ideas that could feed into the EIP process**, with the majority of projects focusing on primary production's needs and establishing clear links with the EIP. However, most projects assessed have only kicked-off recently, making it too early to identify concrete results.

The **use of the common format for abstracts by EIP OGs** and by thematic networks and multi-actor projects under H2020, and the dissemination of these abstracts via the EIP network, is an important precondition to fostering the future complementarity between EIP and H2020. The obligation for multi-actor projects to produce practice abstracts has only started under call 2016. Therefore, the use of this mechanism **has so far remained limited**, with very few OGs and H2020 relevant projects having published their projects under the EIP common format.

The evaluation also confirmed that **awareness of the potential connections that exist or that could be established with H2020 is low among EIP stakeholders** in the countries and regions visited as part of the case studies. The online survey findings suggest that those who are familiar with the multi-actor projects and the thematic networks are highly interested in taking part in these initiatives, so the potential for collaboration is indeed strong. It is expected that with the consolidation of the process and the launch of more Operational Groups across the different countries and regions in Europe, opportunities for links with H2020 initiatives will be more visible through the EIP EU-level network.

3.5.4. Complementarity and coherence of the EIP with Environmental policy

The third sub-question explores the extent to which there are synergies in the objectives and projects funded by the EIP and relevant EU environmental policies. In particular, links with key EU environmental directives and LIFE+ integrated projects are assessed. The answer to the question builds on legal and programming documents available, a review of targeted sectors and priorities in the RDPs, and an assessment of titles and descriptions of running OGs published on the EIP website.

Documentary evidence and stakeholders' views to: (i) confirm that EIP (potential) OG beneficiaries are made aware of LIFE+ integrated project opportunities; and (ii) identify any (potential) synergies between LIFE+ integrated projects and EIP OGs

The EU's **Environmental Policy** is extensive and wide-ranging, accounting for more than 500 Directives, Regulations and Decisions, covering issues ranging from acid rain to Green House Gas emissions to water pollution. Environmental and climate-related actions are also integrated into major EU spending programmes, including the cohesion policy, regional development, energy, transport, research and innovation and the Common Agricultural Policy.

Potential synergies between environmental policy and the EIP can be easily identified in projects implemented by Operational Groups and research conducted by EIP Focus Groups. The potential for joint opportunities for collaboration, including Operational Groups working on solutions for achieving environmental policy objectives, is among the most relevant elements. In the same line, both OGs and Focus Groups will help support the

implementation of a number of **key EU environmental directives** such as the Water Framework Directive, the Nitrates Directive, the Habitats Directive, the National Emissions Ceiling Directive, the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive, etc., by looking for practical solutions to fulfil aims and obligations in these Directives.

The EIP is also relevant for the **LIFE Programme**⁹⁵, which is the financial instrument supporting environmental, nature conservation and climate action projects throughout the EU. Since 1992, LIFE has co-financed over 4,300 projects and, for the period 2014-2020, it will contribute with €3.4 billion to the protection of the environment and climate.

Though the potential exists, deeper links with EIP have so far been developed only to a limited extent. LIFE, for example, promotes the implementation and integration of environment and climate objectives in other policies and Member State practices. In addition, it recognises that effective conservation needs a variety of different stakeholder groups working together, including those who work to protect the land and those that make a living from it. This could create a valuable opportunity for creating stronger links with the EIP.

Also relevant are Integrated Projects funded under the **LIFE+ Programme**, which were introduced in order to implement environmental legislation and goals on a wider scale. It provides funding for plans, programmes and strategies developed on the regional, multi-regional or national level. Projects are characterised for having an all-encompassing approach which ensures the involvement of multiple stakeholders. Of key relevance to EIP is that these projects promote the mobilisation of other funding sources including EU agricultural and regional funds, as well as national and private funds. Operational Groups could therefore benefit from an improved flow of information and the creation of links with LIFE Integrated Projects.

The case study reports reveal a **lack of awareness and clarity among stakeholders consulted** across the different regions and countries about the links between EIP and EU environmental policies and projects, and how exactly these different levels of programming could interact with each other. Only stakeholders interviewed in Sweden referred explicitly to potential links with environmental policy, by identifying theoretical synergies between the EIP and large scale LIFE+ integrated projects. However, they also highlighted that no such projects exist in Sweden. According to Swedish stakeholders consulted by the evaluation, there are some overlaps between current EIP applicants and past LIFE+ beneficiaries, another indication that synergies could occur. However, in practice there appear to be no formal links between the EIP and LIFE+ integrated projects.

Number and proportion of running OGs that target environmental subjects or questions

At this early stage of implementation of the EIP initiative, it is difficult to calculate the number and proportion of running Operational Groups that target environmental subjects or questions. There is not a consolidated database of OGs available on the EIP website, and there are only a handful of OGs that have published their projects on the EIP projects database using the common format for practitioners. Furthermore, many regions and countries have not selected OGs yet.

However, an analysis of the target sectors and topics foreseen in the RDPs shows that environmental subjects⁹⁶, are present in the majority of programmes providing a pre-selection of relevant sectors and topics. These topics may also be present in the RDPs that have left the sectors and topics open.

⁹⁵ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/>

⁹⁶ Including water management and efficiency, bio-diversity, agro-environment, adaptation to climate change, environmental performance

As of late June 2016, the EIP Service Point had received and published information on 108 running OGs across fourteen RDPs (including Austria, seven regions in France, and six regions in Germany). A scan through the titles and descriptions of OGs available on the EIP website evidences that there are a few running OGs that focus on environmental topics, but it is difficult to provide an exact number. In the future, the database of EIP projects should provide a more precise description of how it relates to environmental issues through the keywords and sector fields in the template.

Main findings in sub-question 5.3

There is **fertile ground for potential links and synergies between the EIP and environmental policy**, with environmental topics present in the majority of RDPs as priority topics and sectors for funding. Despite the potential for joint collaboration, there is scarce and very general information on the EIP website and available brochures and communication channels to make farmers, foresters and OG beneficiaries aware of opportunities for funding and collaboration. Managing Authorities in charge of rural development programmes consulted by the evaluation also seem to be unaware of the links that could be developed between the different sources of funding.

It is still early in the EIP implementation process to assess the number of projects that target environmental subjects or questions, but it is expected that in the future, the database of EIP projects should provide a more exact estimate. The main challenge remains to communicate more about how the different programmes and initiatives could complement each other, and the specific opportunities available.

3.5.5. Complementarity and coherence of the EIP with Regional policy

The fourth sub-question aims at assessing the extent to which there are links between the EIP and European Structural and Investment Funds other than the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) that are likely to result in added value for both. In particular, the analysis of available evidence and stakeholders' views explores synergies and complementarities with the EIP OGs through the Smart Specialisation Strategies.

Documentary evidence and stakeholders' views to confirm (potential) synergies between applied research projects funded through ERDF and EIP OGs

In broad terms, the EU's **Regional Policy** aims to support "job creation, business competitiveness, economic growth, sustainable development, and improve citizens quality of life" across EU regions and cities. Regional Policy has a strong impact in many fields. Its investments help to deliver diverse EU policy objectives and complements EU policies including those dealing with research and innovation.

The EU delivers its regional policy goals through three main funds, including the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), as well as the Cohesion Fund (CF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). Together with the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), they make up the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds which have a combined budget of €454 billion for the programming period 2014-20.

The ERDF focuses on several key priority areas, including innovation and research; the digital agenda; support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); and the low-carbon economy. In the 2014-2020 programming period, **30% of the total budget allocation is being deployed for innovation** in this wider sense.

Particularly relevant for the EIP are the **Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3)** that are a key part of the new EU Cohesion Policy. Regulation (EU) 1301/2013 defines 'smart specialisation strategy' as "*the national or regional innovation strategies which set priorities in order to build competitive advantage by developing and matching research and*

*innovation own strengths to business needs in order to address emerging opportunities and market developments in a coherent manner, while avoiding duplication and fragmentation of efforts.*⁹⁷

Between 2014 and 2020, RIS3 is a priority for every region within the ESI Funds, as well as the Horizon 2020 programme and other initiatives. In effect, such strategies are expected to support a more efficient use of ESI Funds and to increase synergies between different EU, national and regional policies and funding, complementing private investments. The existence of a national or regional smart specialisation strategy is a pre-condition for ERDF funding i.e. EU Member States and regions must have RIS3 strategies in place before their Operational Programmes supporting these investments are approved.⁹⁸ In this context, the **role of the various innovation stakeholders** and entrepreneurs in each Member State and region is of crucial importance as it is their knowledge and commitment which allows, through a bottom-up led approach, to identify the priority areas and knowledge-based investments that are most likely to deliver growth and jobs in the regions. As of 2016, three in every four EU regions (85 in total) indicated 'agri-food' as one of their key investment areas under smart specialisation, positioning it as one of the most popular themes, and a total of over 270 agri-food related RIS3 priorities have been encoded in a recently created database of regions' priorities (the Eye@RIS3 database⁹⁹).

In order to **prioritise the identification and achievement of synergies** between Cohesion Policy, rural development and innovation policies, DG REGIO encourages EIP policy-makers and Managing Authorities to take note of the smart specialisation priorities that emerge in the fields related to their activities and examine the potential for synergies with these bottom-up priorities.¹⁰⁰

The Eye@RIS3 database provides a strong basis for exploiting and improving **synergies and complementarities with the EIP**. For example, rural innovation actors seeking to form an Operational Group can benefit from using this database to position themselves, find their niches and seek out potential partners for collaboration. Moreover, projects funded under the implementation of RIS3 strategies can improve their visibility through the EIP network and share information that could potentially develop into inter-regional collaborations.

Operational Groups can also benefit from the **Smart Specialisation Platform for Agri-Food** which was launched jointly in June 2016 by DG AGRI, DG REGIO and DG RTD, in cooperation with DG JRC. The Agri-Food Platform aims to promote innovation-driven investment in the domain of agri-food, based on bottom-up interregional cooperation in the value chain.

A key aspect of this initiative is that it supports regions in combining different EU investment instruments to develop their smart specialisation strategies. The first step is to identify lead-regions and priority areas to start more specific partnerships for co-investments in the modernisation of specific agri-food value chains. These partnerships should build on regional clusters and innovation systems but have European added-value through up-scaling regional efforts by exploiting synergies. The topic already attracts large international investments from the private sector, but the aim of the initiative is to involve further partners such as farmer organisations, new co-operatives and start-up companies.

⁹⁷ Regulation (EU) 1301/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013

⁹⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docqener/informat/2014/smart_specialisation_en.pdf

⁹⁹ <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/eye-ris3>

¹⁰⁰ Enabling synergies between European Structural and Investment Funds, Horizon 2020 and other research, innovation and competitiveness-related Union programmes: *Guidance for policy-makers and implementing bodies*, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, 2014

There is also the potential to fund thematic platforms and networks under ERDF where stakeholders in particular regions have the potential to network and to start OGs together (e.g. RIS3 Communities in Catalonia)

Interviews with DG REGIO officials confirm that there is a solid basis for EU regional funds to work together with rural development funds and the EIP. The first steps have been taken at the political level, connecting government stakeholders in the regions and Member States, and gradually working down to reach farmers, foresters and other EIP stakeholders and connecting people with the same interests. The Smart Specialisation Platforms (including the Platform for Agri-Food), meetings and conferences have been instrumental to enhance links between stakeholders. In parallel to these actions, internal coordination activities have been taking place between relevant Commission DGs (AGRI, REGIO, RTD, and JRC) to set up a common agenda.

In view of DG REGIO, the main challenge is communicating to and engaging with EIP stakeholders on the ground, including Operational Groups, to present them with these new opportunities for collaboration. Many of those participating in the Operational Groups are more likely to continue working with people that they have a history of working with. H2020 and EU regional funding present the potential to move away from the old habits and traditions and to explore new partnerships with different types of stakeholders. It is therefore important to showcase how EIP applicants could apply for funding from different sources and network with different stakeholders; the activities implemented by the agri-food platform are a good way to do so.

Horizon 2020 funding is more publicized and a more common funding source for the EIP, but the ERDF is complementary to H2020 and to rural development funding. ERDF funding is more flexible than H2020 in terms of what types of projects can be funded, but it is also strongly anchored in specific regions. If there is an interest to work transnationally, EIP projects are better served under H2020.

The majority of case study reports evidence weak or non-existing links between the EIP and the ERDF. However, a few interesting exceptions were identified, namely:

- In Italy, Managing Authorities in a number of regions confirmed strong links between the EIP and their regional Smart Specialisation Strategy. Whether or not implementation of the EIP will in fact be coherent with those strategies will only be able to be assessed once the first OGs are set-up and start implementing their projects.
- In Sweden, there are clear linkages between the EIP and the priorities of Swedish regions. Innovation is a key criterion for project funding under ERDF for example. Cooperation is however complicated by multi-level governance structures and there was little evidence in practice of any links between EIP and regional funding instruments. This barrier was acknowledged by the MA in Sweden and measures are being taken to improve coherence and understanding of how different 'levels' of funding could work together indicating a possibility of improved synergies in the future.

Main findings in sub-question 5.4

Available documentary evidence and stakeholders' views confirm strong potential synergies between ERDF funding opportunities and EIP OGs, in particular through the **Eye@RIS3 database and the Smart Specialisation Platform for Agri-Food**, which provide information on potential partners and opportunities for collaboration.

Consultations with DG REGIO officials indicate that first steps to further enhance links have been taken at the political level, working with regional and national authorities and stakeholders, with a view to gradually disseminating the information to reach stakeholders at grassroots levels.

The sharing of information is useful, but the challenge is that this then leads to other more substantive interactions and projects; otherwise, the impact will remain limited. Meetings, conferences, and available platforms and tools have so far been instrumental to enhance links between stakeholders. However, dissemination is an on-going challenge, which requires a strong focus on coordination activities between relevant Commission DGs and with Managing Authorities and multipliers at national and regional level.

3.5.6. Evaluation judgement

Under this theme, the evaluation assessed the extent to which the EIP is **complementary and coherent with other EU policies**, namely the Europe 2020 Strategy, Horizon 2020 (which plays an integral role in the EIP), environmental policy and regional policy. As depicted in the intervention logic diagram, the ability of the EIP to achieve the systemic changes envisaged depends in part on such synergies. Regarding Horizon 2020 in particular, complementarity works in both directions, with EIP OGs encouraged to pursue issues identified in large-scale research projects in more practical terms, while ideas and knowledge generated in the EIP could also be taken up in Horizon 2020 multi-actor projects and spread through thematic networks.

The evaluation found that there is a **solid basis for external coherence** between the EIP and other policies. At the broader strategic level, initial conditions have been established for the EIP and the projects funded within it to contribute to the Innovation Union. Potential synergies with Horizon 2020, and with environmental and regional policies, are also manifest in the legal and programming documents reviewed and in the priorities established by Managing Authorities in the Member States and regions. The synergies with Horizon 2020 are stronger than the links with environmental and regional funding sources since they have been built into the EIP design itself, and dissemination strategies and tools are available and provide a good basis for progress on this front. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that a number of OGs will tackle issues related to environmental and regional policy.

Despite the potential favourable conditions for synergies and cross-fertilisation, consultations with Managing Authorities and EIP stakeholders in the Member States and regions suggest that at this stage there is still limited **awareness of the potential for joint opportunities and other synergies** between the EIP and related EU funding and initiatives. This is in part related to the fact that EIP implementation is just starting in many RDPs, and stakeholders are currently prioritising the set-up and opportunities offered by rural development funding at Member State / regional level at this early stage of development of the measure.

This limited awareness is also linked to **specific challenges** that could be progressively addressed once the EIP has been fully introduced and firmly established. For example, getting stakeholders to know about the different pathways to linking up the EIP with other EU programmes requires a strong focus on coordination activities between relevant Commission DGs, and with stakeholders at national and regional levels. It is important to communicate with stakeholders about how the different programmes and initiatives could complement each other, and disseminate information about the specific opportunities available.

4. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation has collated views from a wide range of sources including Managing Authorities, farmers, foresters, the agricultural industry, EU-level interest groups, consultants, advisors, brokers, facilitators, and the innovation and research communities. It is also built upon a thorough review of RDP documentation and processes across the EU and, where available, details of EIP Operational Group (OG) calls and/or selected projects.

The following pages bring together **findings from across the four themes addressed in the evaluation to draw overall conclusions** on the EIP and its design and implementation so far. In order to compare the theory of how the EIP is meant to work with experiences in practice, for each of the conclusions we refer back to the intervention logic presented in section 2.2.3 of this report.

When reading the conclusions, it is important to bear in mind the timing of the evaluation. While the EIP was officially launched in 2012, it is still **very early days**, with only a small proportion of the 3,205 planned OGs having been awarded funding and the EIP still gaining traction. It will inevitably take time for individual projects to produce the desired effects and for the more systemic changes to which the EIP should contribute to take root. For this reason, we have focused on progress in terms of what could reasonably be expected at this stage, leading to an assessment of the pre-conditions for enabling success.

4.1. Overall conclusions

The EIP was established based on the rationale that current rural development needs demanded a **new mechanism** for farmers, forest managers, researchers, advisers, business and NGOs to work together to generate **innovative solutions to practical problems**. The evidence collected and the analysis of the early implementation of the EIP have clearly shown that its premise on the development and dissemination of innovative farming practices which address both productivity and sustainability is seen as valid and important. That 26 Member States, including **96 of a possible 111 RDPs, have decided to programme for the EIP** testifies to the perceived need for its distinctive approach to innovation.

The EIP approach seeks to move to an innovation ecosystem in which farmers (alongside other essential actors) are active participants in the co-creation of innovative solutions, rather than passive recipients of theoretical or difficult-to-apply knowledge. It leads to a focus on projects which facilitate **co-ownership of innovative solutions** and / or in which **farmers take a leading or the lead role in a project**. The bottom-up approach should guarantee that needs of farmers and forest managers are tackled and that emerging innovative opportunities may find funding that previously was unavailable. While there are many initiatives focused on innovation at European and Member State / regional levels, the evaluation has found that the **EIP's bottom-up and farmer-led approach is truly distinctive and highly appreciated by stakeholders**.

The EIP's **intervention logic** shows how funding for the establishment and operation of, and support for, OGs (at Member State / regional level) and networking activities (at European level) should lead, in the first instance, to innovative solutions to the practical challenges facing farmers and foresters, and the dissemination of these solutions among relevant stakeholders so they can be implemented in practice and stimulate follow-up action. Later on, more systemic results are expected in part through the realisation of complementarities with the Horizon 2020 programme, the interconnection of OGs across borders and with other initiatives seeking to promote innovation in the agriculture and forestry sectors.

The evaluation approach considered the early stage of implementation (OGs have only been selected in seven of the 20 regions we visited for in-depth case studies) and therefore did not seek to assess the effects of the EIP beyond output level. Instead, we examined the theory underpinning the EIP (as depicted in the intervention logic) based on the evidence available so far, and found that it **broadly holds true**.

The evidence leads us to several **broader conclusions**. First, the EIP addresses needs that have been described not only in RDP documentation but by a wide array of stakeholders. That the vast majority of RDPs have programmed for the EIP and devoted substantial resources to it is unusual for a new measure, and demonstrates that the Member States and regions are willing to prioritise and address these needs.

Innovation actors, most importantly farmers and forest managers, emphasised a lacking vehicle for projects linking research and practice, which was consistent across countries / regions despite big differences in the agricultural context and innovation infrastructure. **The flexibility of the EIP allows it to tackle this and to be shaped to widely disparate circumstances**. Agricultural businesses are more likely to become involved in the innovation process under the EIP as compared with other funding streams for innovation in the agricultural sector. Even if there are doubts as to whether OGs are likely to be fully *farmer-led*, the selection criteria put in place by most RDPs should be enough to ensure **the interests of primary producers will be at the heart of project plans**,

Individual OGs, while highly diverse, are for the most part dealing with relevant issues from a practical perspective, and bringing together the desired innovation actors. Assuming that a substantial proportion of the envisaged 3,205 OGs are formed, it is highly likely that they will lead to a **large number of innovative solutions** to practical agricultural and forestry problems.

Although innovation actors consider the application process as organised by Member States and regions to be **lengthy**, it has not prevented them from applying. The possibility to provide **lump-sum support for setting-up coupled with a relatively simple application seems to encourage innovation** actors to work together to take the necessary steps to invest time in putting together an eligible project proposal.

The evaluation also found that, in many countries and regions, national / regional Rural Networks have **promoted awareness of the EIP** and will be involved in **publicising and disseminating the results** of OGs, increasing the chances of success. Similarly, at EU level the EIP network is **facilitating the exchange of expertise and good practices** and **involving multipliers** who will be crucial for the later application and / or follow-up of OG results.

The available data suggest that **where the EIP networks and NRNs / RRNs have been active** at regional/national level, **they have been strongly** involved in the activities described above and thereby **promoting the uptake of the EIP**. However, a **lack of clear EIP-related activity plans** raises concerns about how many NRNs / RRNs will do this in practical terms. Also, efforts for dissemination and translation related to OGs projects and materials produced by EIP network activities (Focus Groups, workshops and seminars) are still at a too low level.

The EIP's **higher-level objectives** entail more systemic changes related to knowledge flows depending on the funding of a critical mass of successful projects, with the results widely disseminated and applied as expected. Envisaged complementarities with Horizon 2020, of which several practical examples already exist, as well as other initiatives, will also be important.

The above conclusions make the case that the **EIP has got off to a good start**. However, the EIP does signify a major change in how agricultural innovation is organised both at EU level and in most Member States. Unsurprisingly, this raises some **challenges which need to be addressed** to optimise its delivery and future success.

Although several thousand farms will participate in OGs, this is only a small proportion of all farms in the EU. Therefore, the dissemination of OG results and their wider application on farms that an OG partner is vital. OGs will not be able to accomplish this task on their own, but at the same time AKIS structures are often fragmented and not currently equipped to disseminate the large volume of additional project outputs which EIP OGs (as well as and H2020 multi-actor projects) will generate. In many of the Member States and regions, **structures to enable connections and the dissemination of innovation** between the regional, national and EU levels are **not adequately developed**. This is

compounded by the large number of farm businesses which need to be reached and the amount of material that will eventually have to be disseminated.

The EIP aspires to involve farmers and forest managers in OGs as full partners or as project leaders, although in a few countries this is not being made a requirement for OGs. For most farmers or forest managers, this will be the first time that they participate in a project which tests new innovations, and for many others it will be the first time that they apply for competitive RDP funding.

If the perceptions of the **application process** or of the **cash flow implications (due to the lack of advanced payments)** of accessing RDP funding for this type of project is too onerous, the fear is that many farmers with good ideas for projects may choose not to take them forward. The evaluation found evidence that in some cases particular choices made by some RDPs in their implementation of EIP are likely to add to the administrative burden faced by applicants. Similarly, some smaller businesses, including some primary producers, may be deterred from applying for funding as a result of **the lack of advance funding and the administrative burden associated with EIP**.

Many of these issues could be overcome by ensuring that innovation brokers support farmers and forest managers who take the lead in OG projects with their applications, but in some Member States and regions this type of role is not currently foreseen. Moreover, feedback from stakeholders has also identified **concerns and uncertainties about the perceived administrative burden**, which could restrict the willingness or capacity of some farmers and forest managers to take the lead in OG projects.

Our analysis is that emphasis should be given to **not watering down EIP's distinctive practical 'bottom-up' approach**. Obviously, the focus of several MS in this early implementation stage has been on getting into place their own OG measure, translating EU rules into national or regional legislation and launching first calls. However, we found instances where the EIP has been used to build on existing national programmes without sufficient consideration of what is meant to be distinctive about the EIP.

The **cross-border element** also merits brief discussion. Given that the EIP is mainly funded through RDPs, it is primarily aimed at addressing Member State / regional needs. However, it is also intended to support the exchange of innovative practice between farms in different regions and countries, which can enhance the measure's benefits and provide substantial EU added value. This is seen as a worthy objective in the majority of Member States and regions where we conducted fieldwork. However, this aspect of the EIP has not been fully grasped in some countries and regions where we conducted case studies. This may detract from the overall effectiveness of the EIP, particularly regarding the systemic results that are desired in the medium-to-long term.

Finally, the EIP is being introduced into a research, development, innovation and entrepreneurial landscape in agriculture which is already complex, multi-faceted and operating on multiple levels. For the EIP to fully realise its potential, it needs to **fit well within the wider innovation ecosystem**. Practical connections are already being made with the Horizon 2020 programme in this regard. More widely, in most Member States and regions the EIP is being launched with limited concrete links to other national and regional agricultural funding programmes. This is to be expected at this early stage, when it is important to launch the measure and ensure that it achieves its core outputs, but later on it will be important to take full advantage of potential synergies and complementarities.

4.2. Recommendations

While the conclusions presented above are broadly positive, the evidence also pointed to **ways in which the effectiveness of EIP could be improved**. It must be stressed that these suggestions were made in the spirit of recognising that EIP was a new, bold and ambitious initiative and that, consequently, it will need both nurturing and developing as key stakeholders at Member State / regional and European levels learn from its initial implementation.

The recommendations below build on suggestions made by consultees during the evaluation and cross reference ideas from stakeholders against the evaluation team's

analysis of RDP delivery and specifically the actions related to the EIP across the 96 regional/national programmes where it is being implemented. The recommendations attempt to condense the lessons from the evidence collected in terms of a few key themes, which recurred throughout the evaluation and which, if addressed effectively, could help to ensure that EIP delivers its significant potential.

The recommendations fall into four key areas for the short-to-medium term and one supplementary longer term issue. All of these include components that should be dealt with at EU level as well as aspects requiring action by the Member States / regions. In the short to medium-term the focus for development of the EIP should be on:

- 1. Improving multiplication to maximise effectiveness, follow-up action and synergies:** at national or regional levels, increasing input from practice, dissemination and intensifying networking activities and structures for the messages and learning emerging from Operational Groups, Thematic Networks, Multi-Actor projects and Focus Groups, so that this learning reaches as many farmers, forest managers, advisors, businesses, researchers and other relevant stakeholders as possible;
- 2. Simplifying and improving administrative systems and rules:** at national or regional levels, ease implementation of the EIP by reducing the administrative burden both for applicants and administrators, and to provide appropriate support and facilitation for actors at all stages of the OG lifecycle. Making the measure easy to engage with will allow farmers, foresters, SMEs and industry actors to use the EIP to focus on driving innovation and building new networks. This should also include revisions to EU rules to make it easier for OGs to involve these actors, e.g. by adding provisions in the basic legal text which enable advance payments for OG projects and simplify the forming of cross-border OGs;
- 3. Promoting the understanding of the EIP's EU added value:** at all levels, improving clarity about the distinctive features and EU added value of the EIP so that stakeholders, who are very enthusiastic about the EIP so far, can clearly articulate the case for prioritising it in the medium to long term. Speeding up bottom-up innovation development and dissemination within the Member States and regions, as well as facilitating exchange of innovative practice between farms in different regions and countries, will support the Innovation Union and increased economic success;
- 4. Building existing national and regional agricultural knowledge and innovation structures into an EU wide AKIS structure:** improving the integration of the EIP within national/regional AKIS, supported by better coordination of networking structures at EU level. Build "Farm Innovation Systems", systematically linked into an EU wide AKIS, and support innovation-focused farmer-to-farmer (or groups of farmers) exchange programmes.

The final, longer term recommendation is:

- 5. Links to other funding:** as the EIP grows and the projects it supports conclude, there is a need to consider how the groups of actors, who in many cases will have been brought together for the first time by the EIP, can continue to work together to facilitate interactive innovation. With many other programmes at both national and EU level supporting innovation, links to and awareness of potential 'follow up' funding will help OGs to develop their work further and / or to come up with new ideas for further collaboration. While this goes beyond the desired results of the EIP, it is important for making the more systemic changes described in Article 55 of the EAFRD Regulation. For instance, **widening the use of the EIP practice abstract format to national/regionally funded projects and other innovation projects** could be an example of fuelling connections and spill-overs between various innovation oriented programmes. Encouraging farmers and industry members to continue playing a leading role in the co-creation of innovation projects in the longer term will also help to embed an innovation culture in the agricultural sector.

4.2.1. Multiplication

Multiplication refers to dissemination as well as getting the right multiplier mechanisms and structures in place. This is at the heart of the EIP as well as being a key focus of related activity supported by H2020 such as Thematic Networks (TN). However, using existing multiplication mechanisms to disseminate the results of EIP OGs poses considerable challenges in light of the EIP's scale and ambitions. These include:

- **Volume of information:** the amount of information on projects will **increase exponentially** over the next five years as more OGs in particular become active. Even with very short practice abstracts (up to half a page of A4), which are regarded as an excellent approach, by the end of the programming period there will likely be over 1,500 pages of dense text to deal with.
- **Multiplier mechanisms:** the evidence suggests that only a few tens of thousands of farming businesses and other stakeholders will be directly participating in the planned OGs, TNs and FGs. With 20 million farms across the EU, reaching out to most farms directly will not happen sufficiently within the projects or networks themselves. *Effective interlinked mechanisms* will therefore be needed to disseminate the messages which emerge. For dissemination to be effective, it is clear that further mechanisms are needed to take the results from OGs and multiply them effectively, both within the Member States / regions where they take place and to other areas of Europe.
- **Language:** dissemination beyond regional and national borders, especially to farmers, will be seriously constrained by language skills and the lack of resources to deliver translations of much of the material generated. The current regulation states that practice abstracts from EIP OGs are only obligatory in their native language and part of them will not be easily accessible to those in other Member States. If all OG abstracts were published in English – as provided for in the EIP guidance document to incentivise contacting between actors and OGs -, this would help with dissemination across Europe, but would not fully solve the problem, as the main target audiences (farmers, farm advisors or those who work in the wider agricultural sector) are not necessarily proficient in English. Taking into account that it would be unrealistic to translate all the information which will be produced in the EIP into every language, **clarity is needed about how translation of practice abstracts and EIP network material will be facilitated**, so that the funding invested in OGs and EU-level EIP networking activities has the maximum impact at farm level.

Possible ways to address these multiplication challenges include:

- a) **Improving the EIP website (EU level):** investing in scaling up the EIP website as the volume of information available via EIP increases will be essential. **The use of practice abstracts is to be commended as an accessible and focused approach.** These abstracts must allow users to drill down into more information by following clear web links, suggest other abstracts and projects which it would be useful for readers to access and provide links to those involved in the OGs.

Visual representation of project results, whether as videos, photos or even succinct infographics, helps users to overcome language barriers and can be more engaging for farmers than written reports. The use of visual communication methods should thus be further publicised and prioritised. At Member State / regional levels, training or support could potentially be provided to OGs to help them identify and apply best practice in the use of visual communication methods which engage other stakeholders.

The ultimate aim is for the EIP website to become the:

- Authoritative 'go to' source for information on agricultural innovation in the EU;
- **Easiest to search agricultural innovation tool accessible for free** to farmers, foresters, farm advisors and agri-businesses, since most of them

do not have time to search through extensive menus or lists of projects to find what they need. It is vital that the website is run in a way that makes it easy to search the large repository it will ultimately contain. The two key ways to do this, which are not mutually exclusive, are to ensure that:

- The **website is intuitive and has a clear menu structure** which allows users to quickly find information, especially practice abstracts, focused on the issues they wish to search for, using menu terms which are readily understood by farmers and farm advisors.
- **Search engine optimisation (SEO)**¹⁰¹ should be undertaken so that as many potential users as possible will find relevant abstracts using commercial search engines. Despite in-site mechanisms such as the search function on the EIP database, it should be recognised that commercial search engines (such as e.g. Google) are highly sophisticated and likely to be depended on by stakeholders. Effective use of such SEO will ensure that **EIP results appear high up search lists** and are thus likely to be accessed, both increasing the scale on which relevant information is shared and driving new potential users to the site, many of whom may not have previously known about the EIP.

- b) **Including multipliers in OGs (RDP level):** Managing Authorities should incentivise all OGs to include multipliers who could help with their broad practical knowledge and experience and at the same time **spread the word** on the work being done to speed up innovation, thanks to their **connections** to other farmers, foresters and other stakeholders. If they are a partner in the project, farm advisors, farmers' organisations, supply chain companies and other individuals / organisations who work with multiple farmers and foresters, will both contribute to better project results and help get them out to a wider audience.

They may also help disseminate relevant information during the delivery of the project rather than waiting to the end, thus **speeding up the dissemination and innovation process**. This on-going inbuilt dissemination may also help to obtain feedback from other farmers, foresters and other stakeholders during the project, which will help to provide more input into the ongoing OG project.

- c) **Building the mechanisms for multipliers to play a dissemination role (EU and RDP levels):** there is a need for mechanisms to ensure that farm advisory services (public and private), educators, consultants, co-operatives, agri-businesses and others can help promote dissemination of final results, both when a project concludes and afterwards. For multipliers to effectively disseminate EIP findings, they must:

- Be aware of EIP project results;
- Regard the EIP as a trusted and easy-to-access source of information on cutting edge farm innovation which is useful to their client base;
- Be an integral part of the EIP system, both for ensuring effective co-creation in the projects and for dissemination purposes. With regard to private sector advisors (who are playing an increasingly large role in the provision of advice), incentives have to be set such that the objectives of the EIP are not distorted and all knowledge generated remains in the public domain.

¹⁰¹ Search Engine Optimisation would involve ensure that all practice abstracts and other EIP materials uploaded to the EIP website had the correct key words and terms identified within in them. This will ensure that search engines find them and put them higher up the list of sources identified. In this case, to ensure that farmers and industry members access the abstracts it is essential that key words are selected which will be clearly understood and used by farmers and industry as opposed to academics. For example using common names of a weed rather than its Latin name is likely to mean that farmers will find an abstract on how to control the weed in their crops.

As well as multipliers who work directly with farmers on their farms, further key multipliers who should be involved include:

- The farming and agricultural industry media (print and online): the media are increasingly focused on innovation. Making sure that key agricultural journalists across the EU are aware of EIP outputs will provide a rapid and effective dissemination route. It is worth considering setting up a **dedicated news service for the media** to ensure that on a regular base they are fed with stories which they can promote.
 - **Demonstration farms**: there is an extensive network of private and public sector demonstration farms across Europe. A study to map these will be supported under H2020¹⁰² from 2017 and further calls are expected which will then develop networking activities and action programmes linked to these farms. As farmers are naturally keen to see innovation in practice, ensuring where appropriate that these demonstration farms **showcase findings from EIP projects** could be an effective dissemination route.
- d) **Improve linkages between OGs and Thematic Networks (EU level)**: as more OGs are created, the role of EU level H2020 Thematic Networks (TNs) in facilitating effective exchange between OGs working on similar topics and promoting the findings from OGs to additional Member States should be reinforced.
- e) **Improve linkages between OGs (RDP level)**: consideration should also be given to whether the RDP could usefully incentivise, promote and support mechanisms similar to TNs (as in H2020) and EIP FGs at RDP level in countries which have more than one OG focused on similar innovations. For example in the relatively large, regionalised Member States (France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK) and in Greece, with 435 OGs proposed, it is almost inconceivable that there will not be many OGs which work on similar topics and which would benefit from the effective networking and dissemination a national TN could provide. Such **national thematic networks** could then be integrated in the national Farm Innovation Systems and linked to the EU level EIP network, thereby contribute to a better-connected EU-wide AKIS.
- f) **Ensuring translation of practice abstracts (EU and RDP levels)**: this could be supported by a general obligation in the RD Regulation to translate all practice abstracts from OGs into English and further organised through adequate the management (and the related funding) of translation tasks within the national / regional AKIS. RDP or H2020 funding could enable additional funds to OGs and multi-actor projects which translate their practice abstracts, or language students could be engaged to translate the abstracts.

4.2.2. Administrative Systems and Rules

The administrative burden on applicants for EU funding is a widely recognised concern. The perceived burden comes primarily from three sources:

- **EU regulation**: which imposes particular generic requirements or responsibilities on MAs and applicants for EU rural development funds;
- **National/regional interpretation of these regulations**: which often results in additional requirements and administrative burdens being imposed at a local level (which go beyond EU regulation);
- **Interaction between the regulation, national/regional interpretation and EU audit processes**: which leads to MAs taking a highly cautious approach either

¹⁰² For more information, see RUR-11-2016: On-farm demonstrations: deepening farmer-to-farmer learning mechanisms, URL: <https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/topics/rur-11-2016.html>.

in response to previous audit problems they have encountered, or to avoid such issues in the future.

For a new measure such as the EIP, that is also seeking to attract new types of applicants to areas of work many have not engaged in before, it is understandable that concerns about the administrative burden were raised by many consultees and some MAs, even if these concerns are sometimes a result of perception rather than reality.

Cash flow concerns and the risk which is inherent in carrying the cash flow burden for a project, with grants paid in arrears after the work is done and all suppliers paid, in particular make it hard for individual farmers to take the lead or even take part in OGs.

To ensure that farmers are central to the innovation process and engage in a co-creation model with other actors in innovation projects, it is important that **EU-level rules are revised to allow for advance payments**. These could include paying for labour and some direct costs that need to be incurred from the start of projects. This is a normal procedure in other EU programmes, e.g. those funded through H2020, and would also be logical for OG projects given the nature of the work they are expected to undertake.

It is also important that the administrative burden is not too onerous or discourages farmers' participation in EIP projects. While the administrative burden is often seen to relate primarily to reporting costs, the paperwork, timescales and process associated with applying for OGs are also critical. If such processes are seen as too difficult, then many farmers will decide to give up on ideas that could be pursued through OGs.

Possible ways to address these administration challenges include:

- a) **Application process (RDP level)**: this needs to ensure that applicants can focus on developing an effective project as quickly and simply as possible. Good practices which help farmers and other small organisations to lead applications include:
 - **Two-step process**: Ensuring better understanding and encouraging uptake by MAs of funding for "setting up" OGs, normally as a lump sum to help prepare OG projects. Such funding, where it is used, allows a light touch first step and **support for project development work** to refine an idea, engage the most suitable partners in the preparation process and search for basic information on the subject of the project. However, the importance of using this preparation funding is still insufficiently understood by many Member States / regions. Therefore, this sub measure is often not programmed, even if it would encourage the establishment of OGs, increase their quality and reduce audit problems with the selected innovation projects. It must be stressed that a light touch first step must be quick, otherwise it will be counter-productive and discourage applicants. The support for starting up OGs allows MAs and dedicated experts to provide quick feedback, provide constructive advice to applicants and avoid wasted funding and effort on unsuitable projects.
 - **Tailored application forms**: A number of MAs have used the standard RDP application forms which have been designed for more traditional capital investment grants for EIP OGs. Given the specific focus of EIP OGs and thus the need for the application forms to address different questions, this over standardisation of the process should be avoided wherever possible, as it implies to the applicant that the process is not intended for the type of project they wish to apply for. In a similar vein, MAs could build smart application forms that include a practice abstract to provide information on the selected OGs at the start of their work. This would ensure that other stakeholders were clearly informed about the work of the OG from the very start of their project and could offer to help its project delivery and make links to the OG to learn from their findings.
- b) **Third party brokering and facilitation (RDP level)**: many farmers lack the skills and knowledge to lead an EIP project or will have concerns about the administrative burden of developing or leading a project. In many cases the innovation challenges will be common to multiple farms in the same region, which means that support to

bring them together would improve project quality and dissemination. A number of different types of bodies could usefully help provide project facilitation including:

- Often multiple farms collaborate for other aspects of their business (e.g. buying inputs together, sharing labour and machinery or collective marketing programmes). **Farm advisory services** (public and private), Innovation Support Services, Producer Organisations (POs), farmer organisations and networks and farmer co-operatives could usefully support farmers applying for EIP OGs by **facilitating projects on behalf of their members or clients**. At present, the evaluation shows that a few agricultural chambers and some regions in France and Germany have actively embraced this idea, but our analysis suggests it could also be used effectively in other regions.
- Support services could administer the funding and assist projects with developing bids, record keeping etc. **The Managing Authority or national EIP network** could play a key role in this by **providing innovation services with training and guidelines on the administrative issues** related to setting up OGs. This is already the case in Germany and will probably also help to avoid audit problems and lighten the burden for the Managing Authorities when receiving and processing applications and payments.

c) Advance payments (EU level): While for a capital investment project in RDPs, a bank will normally help farmers to cover any immediate shortfall in funding until the grant is reimbursed, normally through an overdraft, this is not normally the case for innovation projects. The rules for RDPs should therefore be changed to allow for advance payments. This is the case for other EU innovation funding, e.g. projects supported by H2020, which use a system of advanced payments allowing a **significant proportion of the funds to be provided** to the applicant once the contract for the project has been signed. This provides the funding needed to implement the action. The remaining project funds are then released once specific milestones have been delivered, meaning that the contract holder is never in a negative cash flow position for the project.

In most cases these suggested methods of reducing the burden on those applying for and running EIP projects have been used for the EIP in some RDP, for other RDP programmes (e.g. Leader) or other EU research and innovation funding (e.g. H2020). While it is thus for Member States and regions to put many of the suggested changes in place, additional guidance from the Commission on which approaches would be acceptable for and assist with the delivery of the EIP would help further guide MAs in making appropriate implementation choices. NRNs / RRNs also have a key role to play in this regard through spreading good practice so that effective ways to support OGs are taken up more widely.

4.2.3. EU Added Value

It is important that the EIP can demonstrate its EU added value. It is worth re-emphasising that the EU added value of the EIP – and therefore an essential precondition of its success – lies in three key distinctive features:

- **Firstly**, as an EU-wide measure based on the cross-cutting priority of innovation embedded as an obligation in the RD regulation, it is clearly **speeding up innovation development and dissemination in the Member States and regions**. Following the intervention logic of the CAP, it forms part of its strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and supports three main objectives (a) fostering the competitiveness of agriculture; (b) ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources, and climate action; and (c) achieving a balanced

territorial development of rural economies and communities including the creation and maintenance of employment¹⁰³.

- **Second**, the EIP can also enable additional innovations to be developed beyond what can be achieved in regions and Member States alone. **Facilitating the exchange of innovative practice between farms in different regions and countries** is seen as an important objective by progressive farmers and a valuable way to ensure that the economic, social and environmental benefits from agricultural innovation are spread more widely. Some innovation needs will be unique to particular, localised farming systems or environments, but many topics covered by OGs are not confined to national or regional boundaries. Also, real innovation often comes from applying ideas from one area in a new context.
- **Third**, the EIP is building **bridges between the CAP and the European research funding under Horizon 2020**. Both CAP and H2020 formats under the EIP aim at demand-driven innovation, which is ready to apply and disseminate. This system creates extra impact by enabling the connection between the regional/national level projects funded by the RDPs with the EU wide H2020 projects in which a minimum of three Member States must engage (in practice projects often involve 10-15 Member States). It creates a **pooling of expertise beyond borders** and supports both centralised and decentralised **exchange of knowledge** co-created by diverse actors and end-users.
- Last but not least, the EIP network can **monitor needs emerging from practice**. Convergence between OGs arising from similar problems existing in different RD programming areas can more easily be spotted. Thus the EIP also works to **reduce the duplication of funding spent by the Member States and regions on similar problems/opportunities**. These common challenges can be tackled at EU level while making the best use of limited financial resources.

However, our analysis shows that promoting the various elements of this EU added value has not been well supported when looking at how most MAs have approached the EIP so far. In some cases, the EIP has been treated as 'just' another regional innovation support mechanism. This is not surprising so early in the implementation process. But it is potentially concerning that a number of MAs and stakeholders seem ambivalent towards sharing innovation across national or regional borders. Greater efforts to explain the benefits of the EIP and its complementarity / interaction with Member State / regional innovation systems could help address this. The benefit is clear to some stakeholders, but a clearer statement and evidence to show how sharing innovations between RDPs delivers enhanced benefits for farmers would help to ensure that all MAs promote this additional EU added value effectively.

Leading from this, a further consideration is that particularly for those farmers close to borders (whether regional or national borders), many of the farms and supply chain partners they work with will be in another region or country. Commercial companies are also becoming more and more European or global. The fact that is not straightforward for such farmers to form an EIP OG with others facing similar problems, who in some cases may even be their physical neighbours, could make it harder for the EIP to facilitate exchange and foster a more 'bottom up' approach to innovation.

Possible ways to address this include:

- a) **Improving clarity about the distinctive features and EU added value of EIP at all levels**, so that stakeholders, who are very enthusiastic about the EIP so far, can clearly articulate the case for more budget and prioritising EIP in the medium to long term. Speeding up bottom-up innovation development and dissemination within the Member States and regions, as well as facilitating exchange of innovative practice between farms in different regions and countries, will support the Innovation Union and contribute to economic success.

¹⁰³ Art 4 of RD regulation 1305/2013

- b) **Dissemination across Member States (EU level):** building on the role of TNs or developing additional ways to support effective dissemination of project results across borders will help to clarify the extra added value of the EIP network to stakeholders.
- c) Multi region/state OGs (EU level): ensuring that legislation and administrative systems not only allow but incentivise OGs to operate across the borders of more than one RDP would bring additional clear EU added value. Potential mechanism for this could take the form of other cross-border measures allowed through RDPs. For example, collaborative projects in the past have involved the MA in the region in which the lead partner or the largest proportion of the project is delivered taking the lead in managing the relationship with the project. Funding in these circumstances is provided by all the regions in which the project works, but the MAs in other regions rely on the MA in the 'lead' region for the project to process project claims and supervise project delivery. These systems can be relatively simple to administer and models exist in a number of Member States as well as under Leader.

4.2.4. Links to existing agricultural knowledge and innovation systems (AKIS)

While EIP is mainly implemented at Member State / regional level to address the needs listed in individual RDPs, developing stronger links with other R&D and innovation actions would help the EIP to further its objectives and leverage its resources.

The EIP is being introduced into a research, development and innovation landscape in agriculture which is already complex, multi-faceted and operates on multiple levels from projects funded by industry, to regional, national and other EU level programmes. Existing innovation tends to be fragmented, with poor connectivity between public and private sector projects and, for public sector interventions, is often based on top down models of project theme selection.

The EIP is different to most existing publicly funded innovation programmes, given its focus on bottom up projects. Understanding how it can both fill this niche and lead to more systemic changes in other funding programmes to promote the role of farmers and industry in helping focus and deliver agricultural innovation support is important.

For the EIP to optimise its effectiveness it is essential that its place in this wider innovation ecosystem is clear to all stakeholders. Our analysis shows that whilst all MAs and stakeholders recognise this need to ensure that EIP is integrated with other agricultural innovation funding sources, in practice most EIP OG programmes have or are being launched before detailed work has been done to establish links to other programmes.

However, while seeking to address these inherent weaknesses in existing agricultural innovation structures, it is imperative that the national and regional governments do not seek to use EIP funding to replace other investments in innovation or research. Through its interlinkages, the EIP will support, build on and add value to other agricultural innovation structures and seeks to use these other structures to further EIP's own aims.

Key actions which could be taken to ensure that EIP generates even more value to existing innovation structures include:

- a) **Build coherent national or regional AKIS (RDP level):** the EIP creates an opportunity for more work on developing sound and coherent national and regional AKIS **that profit from and link to the (EU-level) EIP network and EU-wide AKIS.**
- b) **Improve integration of existing advisory and networking structures (EU level):** the EIP is instrumental to support an EU wide AKIS by improving knowledge flows in the fragmented national and regional AKISs. However, it would also be key to build an **integrated EU wide AKIS** at EU level **which interlinks these AKISs.** In turn, this may ensure better coherence with other policies at the regional, national and EU level.

For example, the EU introduced the Farm Advisory System (FAS) linked to the CAP in the previous programming period. While initially focused mainly on cross compliance, the role of the FAS has been extended to include promoting innovation. However, Member States have little awareness of this and need to develop this new wider service offering. Even where this new role has started, it is still a fledgling, stand-alone service. Despite this, in a few Member States effective innovation support services have emerged (in part stimulated by the EIP), but these are not yet interconnected at EU level nor with the FAS in most cases.

Consideration should be given in re-designing the post 2020 CAP to develop a specific new RDP approach to farm advisory and innovation support services. Advisory bodies would need to integrate innovation support and systematically link it to other parts of regional and national AKISs. These "**Farm Innovation Systems**", **if systematically linked into an EU-wide AKIS**, would help to ensure that MAs do not see this as an additional national burden, but rather as a benefit of being an EU Member State. It would therefore encourage them to develop funded and more comprehensive regional and national knowledge and innovation systems and innovation support programmes, **integrating the existing national and regional farm advisory bodies and well-functioning RDP innovation support services**.

These funded national Farm Innovation Systems should also fulfil a role in both helping source innovations from across Europe and help to address the language barriers faced by many farmers in accessing the results from projects in other regions. Helping address the language barriers which farmers face in accessing some of the content on the EIP website, OG reports or the outputs of FGs and TNs, would help to facilitate wider dissemination and exploitation of EIP findings.

- c) **Links to Knowledge Exchange (RDP level):** the EAFRD Regulation already includes measures which support the acquisition of skills and knowledge exchange. There is a clear need to support knowledge exchange to facilitate the uptake of innovation and consideration should be given to whether the promotion of EU farm innovation could be developed by building on the existing RDP skills and knowledge exchange measures to enhance take up of innovative approaches such as:
- Support for innovation-focused farmer-to-farmer (or groups of farmers) exchange programmes between Member States / regions. Farm exchanges are currently possible under Article 14 EAFRD, but it is seldom used. By **connecting such exchanges to EIP activities** they would better serve the purpose of fuelling/speeding up the **dissemination** of successful innovations across Europe. This is an effective way to develop skills and promote cross border knowledge exchange networks.
 - While not all farmers would wish to participate, evidence from regions which have trialled this approach (East of England in the UK in the 2007-13 programme), shows that innovative farmers were keen to travel to see at first-hand how other farmers had addressed similar challenges and **implemented changes on their own farms after they returned home**. At the same time, even if they decide not to apply novel approaches, comparing foreign businesses with their own will help farmers to get a better insight into alternative ways to manage their own farm.
 - Similarly, supporting farmers to **travel to demonstration farms or innovation centres in other Member States** would facilitate the take up of EIP supported innovations and in general lead to more productive and sustainable farms that co-exist harmoniously with the natural resources they depend on.

4.2.5. Links to other funding opportunities

The final (longer-term) recommendation relates to how EIP projects can link to other funding programmes for agricultural innovation, so that successful OGs can be developed further, or could be informed by other innovation projects.

The rationale behind this is not simply project focused in terms of helping successful OGs to secure additional funding to take their work further. There is also an important cultural issue, in that to have long-term impacts it is important that once farmers have, through their involvement in an OG, been part of an innovation project, every effort should be made to ensure that they continue to co-create innovation solutions. This will help to develop an enhanced **innovation culture in agriculture**, in which farmers and SMEs are enthusiastic and regular contributors to innovations which can help the sector to be more competitive and sustainable.

There should not be an automatic right to get more support from other EU funds for successful OGs, but unless members of OGs believe that there is a way forward the projects can become overly local and /or limited in scope, and thereby make less of an impact than if they link through to other programmes. Addressing this by helping OGs see how their work can be linked to other initiatives has a number of benefits: it would help to promote wider dissemination of OG results; it would help OG members learn from other projects and identify potential partners for future work; and it would help embed a more innovative culture in the farming community.

There is already a solid basis for external coherence between the EIP and other policies. At the broader strategic level, initial conditions have been established for the EIP and the projects funded through the initiative to contribute to the Innovation Union commitments of the EIP. Synergies with Horizon 2020, and potentially with environmental and regional policies, are also manifest in the legal and programming documents reviewed and in the priorities established by Managing Authorities in the Member States and regions. The synergies with Horizon 2020 are stronger than the links with environmental and regional funding sources at present, and dissemination strategies and tools are available which provide a good basis on this front.

Looking to the future, concrete actions that could be taken to further align the EIP and other funding opportunities include:

- a) **Demonstrating common needs and links to innovation support under H2020 (EU level)**: with the launch of more OGs across the different countries and regions in Europe, overlapping and common needs from practice which are tackled through several OG will become more visible. The H2020 funding for multi-actor projects linked to the EIP is therefore key. Addressing such problems at EU-wide scale will help reduce costs and duplication. Opportunities for linking with H2020 initiatives should be made more visible through the EU-level EIP networking activities
- b) **Links to other elements and funding mechanisms in the CAP and RDP (RDP level)**: links to both Pillar 1 and 2 are not only implicit in the objectives of the EIP, but where these links are made in RDPs they have demonstrated the possibility of the EIP supporting the delivery of other aspects of the CAP. Managing Authorities in charge of rural development programmes consulted by the evaluation seem to be unaware of the links that could be developed between the different sources of funding. Often this is because different individuals / teams act as representatives for or promote these other programmes. Consistent national AKIS which link to all the available programmes could support them in this regard.

Examples of potential links to other funding include:

- Under Pillar 1: there are currently several examples where EIP OGs have been working together with POs (Midi-Pyrénées region in France) and aligned with Voluntary Coupled Support (for instance in Brittany). These types of linkages could be encouraged further so that more OGs deliver innovative solutions to support Pillar 1 objectives.

- Under Pillar 2: enhanced links between EIP OG innovations with rural development measures can support management of the environment or preparation of future agri-environment-climate measures (e.g. OGs focused on more effective management of agricultural water supplies would have environmental benefits), the development of the rural economy (e.g. short food chains in Aquitaine), links to skills and knowledge exchange programmes (e.g. in the Italian regions). They all help to reinforce the **broader role which the EIP plays in supporting delivery of the RDP**. Typically, some OGs will be testing out possible future agri-environment-climate measures (e.g. although not yet approved the facilitation workshops in England showed that many potential OGs were interested in developing new soil management approaches).
- c) **Links to other EU funding opportunities (EU level)** European Structural and Investment Funds, Inter-regional Programmes (Interreg), Life+ programmes and some parts of Horizon 2020 (Societal Challenge 5, EIT KICs) all have potential links to the EIP which should be further explored and communicated about over time. For instance, **widening the use of the EIP practice abstract format to national/regionally funded projects and other (EU) innovation projects** could be an example of fuelling connections and spill-overs between various innovation oriented programmes.

ANNEX A: TABLES AND SUPPORTING DATA

The following annexes contain tables that support the information presented in sections 2 and 3 of this report.

Annex to section 2: background to the EIP and implementation state of play

The tables below provide detailed information on various aspects of the EIP implementation both at EU level through the EIP network and at Member State / regional level through RDPs.

Tables relating to section 2.4 EIP implementation at EU level

Table 24: Focus Groups 2013-2016 (section 2.4.4 Key tasks of the EIP network)

#	Focus Group	Status	Start / end year
1	Organic farming	Final report published	2013
2	Protein crops	Final report published	2013 / 2014
3	Animal Husbandry	Final report published	2013 / 2014
4	Genetic resources	Final report published	2014 / 2015
5	Soil organic matter	Final report published	2014 / 2015
6	IPM for Brassica	Final report published	2014 / 15 / 16
7	High Nature Value	Final report published	2014 / 2016
8	Mainstreaming precision farming	Final report published	2014 / 2015
9	Permanent grassland	Final report published	2014 / 15 / 16
10	Fertiliser efficiency	On-going (second meeting held)	2014 / 15 / 16
11	Ecological Focus Areas	Final report published	2014 / 15 / 16
12	Short food supply chains	Final report published	2014 / 2015
13	IPM for soil-borne diseases	Final report published	2014 / 2015
14	New entrants into farming	Final report published	2015 / 2016
15	Water and agriculture	On-going (second meeting held)	2015 / 2016
16	Mixed farming systems: livestock / cash crops	On-going (second meeting held)	2015 / 2016
17	Benchmarking farm performance	On-going (second meeting held)	2015 / 16
18	Livestock emissions: reducing emissions from cattle farming	On-going (second meeting scheduled for 9/2016)	2016
19	Nutrient recycling	On-going	2016
20	Sustainable mobilisation of forest biomass	On-going	2016
21	Dairy production systems	Open call for experts	Applications by July 2016
22	Agroforestry	Open call for experts	Applications by July 2016
23	Diseases and pests in viticulture	Open call for experts	Applications by July 2016

Table 25: Workshops, seminars and other activities organised by the EIP network 2013-2016 (section 2.4.4 Key tasks of the EIP network)

Type of activity	Year	Description
Workshops linked to Operational Groups	2014	Five workshops were set-up to explain the possibilities of OGs to agricultural stakeholders. Each workshop invited participants from 5 to 7 countries and was hosted in different regions of the EU. All 28 Member states were covered. A workshop was also conducted to show the links between the EIP and H2020: 'Connecting Research and Practice: opportunities for Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas under Horizon 2020'
	2016	Operational Group exchange: first experiences with OGs
Workshops on specific topics and as a follow-up to Focus Groups	2014	Two workshops were organised on the topics of: (i) 'How to make protein crops profitable in the EU?' and (ii) biosecurity at farm level – challenges for innovation (follow up to Animal Husbandry Focus Group)
	2015	One workshop was organised on the topic of bio-economy, and another one on circular economy. One workshop for National EIP networks was organised with support from the ENRD Contact Point.
	2016	Additional workshops to be organised in 2016/2017, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cities and Food: including short supply chains, urban agriculture. • Forestry: "what the forest can provide, creating new value chains". • Workshop NRNs: "Networking for innovation" • Tools for Farmers: follow-up of the Focus Group on benchmarking
Seminars	2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Programming innovation': how to use the Rural Development Toolkit most effectively for the implementation of the EIP (Madrid, Spain, 26-27 June 2013) • 'Programming innovation in Rural Development: linking science and practice'(Berlin, Germany, 25-26 November 2013)
	2014	'Launching Operational Groups and EIP networking in rural development programmes' (Brussels 18-19 November 2014)
	2015	'Promoting creativity and learning through agricultural knowledge systems and interactive innovation' (Dublin, Ireland, 3-4 December 2015)
	2016	'Data revolution: emerging new business models in the agri-food sector' (Sofia, Bulgaria 22-23 June 2016)
Coordination and information exchange activities and	2014/5/6	Active interaction with different groups and actors ¹⁰⁴ in view of promoting the EIP and exchanging information and maintenance of a list of external experts

¹⁰⁴ Groups include the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR), ERANETs, Joint Programming Initiatives, European Technology Platforms (ETP), PPP bio-based industries, European Network for Rural Development (ENRD), European Evaluation Network, National Rural Networks (NRN), National thematic network on innovation, Farm Advisory System (FAS) coordinating authorities, Innovation Support Services, EIP on water, EIT and KICs, in particular the KIC Food4future and Thematic Networks.

Type of activity	Year	Description
cooperation with external experts		

Tables relating to section 2.5 EIP implementation at national and regional level

Table 26: Innovation brokerage function by typology (section 2.5.2 Countries and regions implementing the EIP, iii Arrangements regarding innovation brokerage services)

Country	Region	Innovation brokerage function
Type 1		
Belgium	Flanders	Yes
Spain	Asturias	Information n/a
UK	Wales	Yes
Type 2		
Finland	Mainland	Yes
France	Martinique	Yes
France	Picardie	Yes
Germany	Baden-Wurttemberg	Yes
Germany	Hessen	Yes
Germany	Saxony	Yes
Greece	n/a	Yes
Hungary	n/a	Yes
Italy	Abruzzo	No
Spain	National	Yes
Spain	Andalusia	Yes
Spain	Galicia	Yes
Spain	Murcia	Yes
Spain	Rioja	Yes
UK	England	No
UK	Northern Ireland	No
Type 3		
France	Guyane	Yes
France	Haute Normandie	Yes
Germany	Lower Saxony and Bremen	Yes
Germany	North-Rhine Westphalia	Yes
Germany	Schleswig – Holstein	Yes
Ireland	n/a	No
Italy	Basilicata	No
Italy	Campania	No
Italy	Piedmont	No
Italy	Sardinia	No
Italy	Sicily	No
Italy	Veneto	Yes
Poland	n/a	Yes

Country	Region	Innovation brokerage function
Portugal	National	No
Romania	n/a	No
Sweden	n/a	Yes
UK	Scotland	No
Type 4		
Cyprus	n/a	Yes
France	Limousin	Yes
France	Réunion	Yes
Italy	Liguria	No
Spain	Basque Country	Yes
Slovakia	n/a	No
Type 5		
Austria	n/a	Yes
Croatia	n/a	No
France	Aquitaine	Yes
France	Corsica	Yes
France	Lorraine	Yes
France	Midi-Pyrénées	Yes
France	Pays de la Loire	Yes
France	Rhône-Alpes	Yes
Germany	Bavaria	No
Germany	Rhineland – Palatinate	No
Italy	Emilia-Romagna	No
Italy	Lombardy	No
Italy	Lazio	No
The Netherlands	n/a	No
Slovenia	n/a	No
Spain	Aragon	Information n/a
Spain	Canary Islands	Yes
Spain	Castilla y Leon	Yes
Spain	Catalonia	Yes
Spain	Extremadura	Yes
Type 6		
Bulgaria	n/a	No
Czech Republic	n/a	Yes
France	Auvergne	Yes
France	Basse-Normandie	Yes
France	Bourgogne	Yes
France	Bretagne	Yes
France	Centre - Val de Loire	Yes
France	Champagne – Ardennes	Yes
France	Guadeloupe	Yes

Country	Region	Innovation brokerage function
France	Ile-de-France	No
France	Languedoc Roussillon	No
France	Mayotte	Yes
France	PACA	Yes
France	Poitou-Charentes	No
Germany	Berlin and Brandenburg	Yes
Italy	Friuli- Venezia - Giulia	Information n/a
Italy	Marche	Yes
Italy	Molise	Yes
Italy	Puglia	No
Italy	Tuscany	No
Italy	Umbria	No
Lithuania	n/a	Information n/a

Table 27: Beneficiaries supported (section 2.5.2 Countries and regions implementing the EIP, vi Beneficiaries supported)

Country	Region	Beneficiaries supported
		Type 1
Belgium	Flanders	Each OG should comprise at least one farmer and one researcher, but any actor can submit a proposal for an OG.
Spain	Asturias	Farmers and breeders, researchers, agri-food industries
UK	Wales	Farmers, foresters, researchers, advisors, businesses, environmental groups and consumer interest groups or other NGOs
Type 2		
Finland	Mainland	SMEs, research units or development organisations, foundations, educational institutions, municipalities or associations.
France	Martinique	Farmers, producers' groups, research bodies, researchers, advisors, companies, environmental groups, consumer associations, other NGOs and any other actors involved in the agricultural, food and forestry sectors
France	Picardie	Producers in the agricultural and forestry sectors, inter-branch organisations, federations or unions, forest managers, research bodies, NGOs, local authorities
Germany	Baden-W	Enterprises, consulting companies, NGOs, associations, research institutes, public organisations, etc.
Germany	Hessen	Producers, companies in the agricultural production chain, research institutes, counselling / advice services, associations, NGOs and public bodies
Germany	Saxony	Natural or legal persons or partnerships.
Greece	n/a	Farmers, breeders and other agricultural parties, relevant cooperation schemes, researchers, universities, consultants, SMEs involved in agriculture, livestock and food, environmental organisations, environmental and climate change NGOs, etc.
Hungary	n/a	Farmers, workers involved in food processing, natural or legal entities involved in forest management, researchers, consultants and advisors.

Country	Region	Beneficiaries supported
Italy	Abruzzo	Agricultural and forestry entrepreneurs, processing and marketing enterprises, research bodies, universities, providers of public or private services, other actors from agri-business sector, rural territories and civil society including NGOs, innovation brokers.
Spain	National	Farmers, breeders, foresters, agri-food companies, researchers, advisors, NGOs
Spain	Andalusia	Natural or legal persons or partnerships.
Spain	Galicia	Farmers, researchers, advisors, NGOs, agri-food industries.
Spain	Murcia	Farmers, research partners, advisors, agri-food industries.
Spain	La Rioja	Farmers, breeders, foresters, agri-food companies, researchers, advisors, NGOs
UK	England	Farmers, researchers, advisors, businesses, public bodies, NGOs, trade organisations and educational institutions.
UK	N. Ireland	n/a
Type 3		
France	Guyane	Farmers, foresters, forest managers, cooperatives, inter-branch organisations, public bodies, associations, development and advisory organisations, local authorities, chambers, educational institutions, research bodies, food processing companies, and any other organisations contributing to rural development priorities
France	Haute-Nor	Public bodies, farmers, companies, chambers, research centres, associations, educational institutions, professional organisations (agriculture, forestry), producers' groups, inter-branch organisations, cooperatives, interest groups.
Germany	LS & BR	Agricultural and horticultural producers, companies in the agricultural production chain, research institutes, counselling / advice services, associations, agricultural organisations and public bodies.
Germany	NR-Westp	Agricultural and horticultural producers, companies in the agricultural production chain, research institutes, counselling / advice services, associations, agricultural organisations and public bodies.
Germany	Sch-Holst	Agricultural and horticultural producers, companies in the agricultural production chain, research institutes, counselling / advice services, associations, agricultural organisations and public bodies.
Ireland	n/a	n/a
Italy	Basilicata	Researchers, farming/forestry/ agro-food firms, cooperatives, consortia, advisors, universities/research bodies
Italy	Campania	Farmers, forest managers, researchers, advisors, trainers, enterprises, associations, consumers, interest groups and NGOs, rural communities and other interested actors
Italy	Piedmont	Agricultural and/or forestry enterprises; research organisations, basic service providers, organisations providing technical support; machines and agricultural/forestry equipment manufacturers, agricultural and breeding producers, producers of wood products.
Italy	Sardinia	Agricultural enterprises, researchers, advisors, firms working in the farming, food and forestry sectors
Italy	Sicily	Agricultural firms, researchers, advisors
Italy	Veneto	Researchers, farmers, enterprises, farming organisations, advisors, associations, etc.

Country	Region	Beneficiaries supported
Poland	n/a	Farmers or farmers' groups, forest managers, research institutes and universities, entrepreneurs in the agriculture and/or food sector, entrepreneurs in the sectors acting on behalf of the agricultural and food sector (e.g. producers of fertilizers, feeds, pesticides, machinery and production equipment), advisory bodies, consumer organisations, local governments, and branch organisations in the food chain sector.
Portugal	Mainland	Farmers, breeders and other agricultural parties, relevant cooperation schemes, researchers, universities, consultants, SMEs involved in agriculture, livestock and food
Romania	n/a	Farmers, producer groups, NGOs, research institutes, universities, consultants and other relevant actors
Sweden	n/a	Authorities, municipalities, counties, regions, associations, organisations and companies.
UK	Scotland	Farmers, researchers, advisors, businesses, public bodies, NGOs, trade organisations and educational institutions.
Type 4		
Cyprus	n/a	Producers, foresters, producer groups, research organisations, market actors, consulting service providers, certification bodies, local actors, other sectors of the food chain, food industry operators, consumer organisations, logistics organisations, NGOs, local authorities, public bodies and others that contribute to the measure.
France	Limousin	Natural or legal persons in the agricultural, food or forestry sectors, local authorities, associations, research organisations, etc.
France	Réunion	Farmers, researchers, advisors, companies, forest managers, and other stakeholders contributing to the objectives of the EIP.
Italy	Liguria	Agricultural and forestry enterprises, public and private universities, research centres, advisory and training service providers recognised by the region, and other stakeholders contributing to the objectives of the EIP.
Spain	Basque C.	Innovation Brokers, technological and/or innovation centres, stakeholders in the agri-food supply chains, farmers, advisors, researchers and agri-food industries.
Slovakia	n/a	n/a
Type 5		
Austria	n/a	Farmers, advisors, researchers, NGOs, administrative bodies, enterprises, etc.
Croatia	n/a	Farmers, advisors, researchers, NGOs, administrative bodies, enterprises, etc.
France	Aquitaine	Farmers, forest managers, private or public organisations in the agricultural and forestry sectors
France	Corsica	Producers and forest managers and their associations, private companies, research and educational institutions, advisory and professional organisations, clusters, associations and NGOs, local authorities
France	Lorraine	Farmers, cooperatives, companies, stakeholders from the forestry sector, public bodies, research and development organisations, inter-branch organisations, producers' groups, local authorities.
France	Midi-Pyr	Farmers or groups of farmers, cooperatives, companies, foresters, associations, Chamber of Agriculture, other development agencies and agricultural federations, agricultural

Country	Region	Beneficiaries supported
		professional trade-unions, technical institutes, research centres, universities and public bodies.
France	Pays de la L	Stakeholders from the agricultural and forestry sectors, and more generally involved in rural development.
France	Rhône-Alpes	Advisory services, technical institutes, research bodies and organisations
Germany	Bavaria	Natural or legal persons including agricultural producers and researchers
Germany	Rhine-Palat	Universities, stakeholders in the agricultural and forestry communities (farmers, associations), etc.
Italy	Emilia-Rom	Farmers, researchers, advisors, trainers, etc.
Italy	Lazio	Agricultural and forestry enterprises, companies working in the processing and marketing of agri-food and forest products, public and private research organisations, producer organisations/associations, enterprise networks
Italy	Lombardy	Agricultural, agro-industrial enterprises, other forms of associations in the agri-food sector (consortia, associations etc.), research organisations, and organisations related to the dissemination of knowledge, advisory organisations, parks and managers of Natura 2000 sites.
Netherl	n/a	n/a
Slovenia	n/a	n/a
Spain	Aragon	For projects within the priority 'farms': at least farmers or farmers associations. For projects within the priority 'irrigation': at least an irrigation community or association.
Spain	Canary Isl	Farmers, researchers, advisors, agri-food industries
Spain	Castilla y Leon	Private companies dedicated to agriculture, breeding, forestry, agri-food processing, groups of companies and actors of marketing supply chains in the agri-food sector, advisors, research Institutes and NGOs.
Spain	Catalonia	Producers, industries, agricultural cooperatives, irrigation associations, universities, research centres, innovation centres, technological industries, administrations, advisors, NGOs, SMEs.
Spain	Extremadura	Farmers, rural communities, researchers, companies, producers' organisations, cooperatives, inter-branch organisations and any other relevant actors of the agricultural and forestry sectors.
Type 6		
Bulgaria	n/a	Research institutes in the fields of agriculture, forestry, biotechnology or food technology, organisations part of the NCAS, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, higher education institutions, NGOs, farmers, SMEs in food processing, and consultancy firms advising in the fields of agriculture or food.
Czech Republic	n/a	Farmers, food producers, researchers, universities, consultants, environmental organisations, NGOs, and rural stakeholders.
France	Auvergne	Farmers, forest managers, research institutes, local authorities, chamber of agriculture, associations.
France	Basse Normandie	Producers, professional organisations, public institutions, research institutes, companies and associations.
France	Bourgogne	n/a
France	Bretagne	Farmers, forest owners, producers' groups, professional organisations, private companies (suppliers, processors), co-operatives, research institutes & universities, local authorities, education centres.

Country	Region	Beneficiaries supported
France	C-Val de L	Public bodies, professional organisations, inter-branch organisations, associations, private companies and co-operatives, farmers, research institutions, local authorities.
France	Champagne-Ardenne	Farmers, forest owners or their associations, organisations in charge of innovation, public bodies, inter-branch organisations, associations, cooperatives, local authorities research and technological institutes, private companies.
France	Guadeloupe	Research institutes, technical centres, professional organisations, agricultural education organisations, Chamber of agriculture, farmers and stakeholders from the agricultural, food and forestry sectors, rural development actors (territorial authorities, associations).
France	Ile-de-Fra	Collective organisations, clusters, interest groups for economics and the environment
France	Lang Rou	Public and private organisations in the agricultural, food and forestry sectors (including producers' groups, cooperatives, professional organisations, and inter-branch organisations)
France	Mayotte	Research institutes, technical centres, agricultural and professional organisations, institutions for agricultural education, associations, local authorities, and other actors involved in the agricultural, food and forestry sectors and in rural development.
France	PACA	Public and private bodies, associations, other organisations involved in the agriculture and food sectors.
France	Poit-Ch	Farmers, researchers, advisors and companies involved in the agricultural and food sectors.
Germany	Berl & Bra	Farmers, advisors, researchers, enterprises, etc.
Italy	Fr-Ven-Giu	Agricultural and forestry enterprises, entrepreneurs from the agri-food sector, cooperatives, consortia ,professional organisations, universities, research and experimentation bodies, research foundations / associations, researchers, advisors
Italy	Marche	n/a
Italy	Molise	Enterprises in the agricultural, agro-energy, forestry sectors, producer organisations, research organisations, actors related to the knowledge sector, advisors and trainers, business networks, consortia, public or private forest owners or managers
Italy	Puglia	Researchers, advisors, farmers, forest managers, enterprises, associations, consumers, NGOs, interest groups, rural communities, actors related to training and innovation activities, etc.
Italy	Tuscany	Agricultural and forestry enterprises, SMEs operating in rural areas, traders, service companies, public entities, actors involved in research, production and transfer of innovation, NGOs, associations, producers' organisations, business representatives, actors involved in dissemination and information, advisors, etc.
Italy	Umbria	Agricultural, forestry and agri-food enterprises, research organisations, experts and companies operating in sectors linked to agriculture, agri-food and forestry.
Lithuania	n/a	n/a

Table 28: Outputs and implementation status (section 2.5.2 Countries and regions implementing the EIP, viii Outcomes of first calls and implementation status)

Country	Region	First call launched	Outcomes	Next steps
Type 1				
Belgium	Flanders	Yes – Feb 2016	Nineteen applications received. The decision to award OG status to five applicants was finalised in July 2016.	First OGs will be launched between September and December 2016.
Spain	Asturias	n/a	n/a	n/a
UK	Wales	Yes	n/a	First application window opened in June 2016 / focus on 7 themes
Type 2				
Finland	Mainland	Yes	No projects were approved because they were too research-oriented.	A second call is currently open for expressions of interest to test some ideas. Later in 2016 another call will be launched for the best ideas to submit full applications.
France	Martinique	n/a	n/a	n/a
France	Picardie	n/a	n/a	n/a
Germany	Baden-W	n/a	n/a	n/a
Germany	Hessen	Yes	Eighteen projects received, out of which 6 have been selected for funding	n/a
Germany	Saxony	Yes – Feb 2015	Six projects selected for funding	n/a
Greece	n/a	No	n/a	First call will be launched in Sep 2016
Hungary	n/a	Yes – July 2016	n/a	Seventy OGs expected to receive funding as a result.
Italy	Abruzzo	No	n/a	n/a
Spain	National	No	n/a	First call planned for second half of 2016
Spain	Andalusia	No	n/a	First call planned for second half of 2016. Fifteen projects expected to receive funding as a result.
Spain	Galicia	n/a	n/a	n/a
Spain	Murcia	No	n/a	First call planned for second half of 2016. Discussions are still on-going on whether specific themes will be targeted or not

Country	Region	First call launched	Outcomes	Next steps
Spain	La Rioja	No	n/a	First call will be launched in Sep 2016
UK	England	Yes – Sep 2015	Eighteen applications received	First projects to be approved in second half of 2016.
UK	N. Ireland	No	n/a	MA still working to develop the EIP in early 2016.
Type 3				
France	Guyane	Yes	Not yet – applications under review	n/a
France	Haute-Nor	n/a	n/a	n/a
Germany	Lower Saxony & Bremen	Yes	Fourteen projects have passed the preliminary selection and are undergoing the next step in the application process.	n/a
Germany	NR-Westp	Yes – May 2015	Not yet – applications under review	n/a
Germany	Sch-Holst	Yes	Eighteen applications submitted	Plans for funding seventeen innovative projects in the agricultural sector in the region over the next three years (2015-2018)
Ireland	n/a	No	n/a	MA still working to develop the EIP in early 2016.
Italy	Basilicata	No	n/a	n/a
Italy	Campania	No	n/a	n/a
Italy	Piedmont	No	n/a	First call planned for second half of 2016
Italy	Sardinia	No	n/a	n/a
Italy	Sicily	No	n/a	n/a
Italy	Veneto	No	n/a	No dates set for first call yet
Poland	n/a	No	n/a	MA still working to develop the EIP, including implementation details, and expects it to be in force in the summer. First OGs would apply in Nov 2016.
Portugal	Mainland	Yes	First call opened in July 2016	n/a
Romania	n/a	No	n/a	MA still working to develop the EIP, including implementation details. First call expected to be launched later in 2016.

Country	Region	First call launched	Outcomes	Next steps
Sweden	n/a	Yes – Aug 2015	Around 130 applications received in response to first call, the majority for setting up OGs	Results of the first call will be announced later in 2016.
UK	Scotland	Yes	Four applications were selected for funding, and a similar number were rejected.	n/a
Type 4				
Cyprus	n/a	No	n/a	First call planned for late 2016
France	Limousin	No	n/a	First call planned for 2017
France	Réunion	n/a	n/a	n/a
Italy	Liguria	No	n/a	First call planned for October 2016
Spain	Basque C.	Yes – Oct 2015	The first call (designed as a trial with a low budget) received 10 applications. Four projects were approved for funding.	Second call expected to be launched soon with a larger budget of around € 2.5 million.
Slovakia	n/a	No	n/a	First call in preparation, to be launched soon
Type 5				
Austria	n/a	Yes – Jun 2015	Fifty-three applications selected, out of which 11 were selected and presented their proposals for the operation of OGs	n/a
Croatia	n/a	No	n/a	MAAs were still working to develop the EIP in early 2016. Plans to launch a call for expressions of interest to test themes / projects
France	Aquitaine	No	n/a	First call planned for 2017
France	Corsica	n/a	n/a	n/a
France	Lorraine	n/a	n/a	n/a
France	Midi-Pyr	Yes - 2015	Four projects were selected for funding.	A second call is planned for 2016
France	Pays de la L	Yes - 2015	First call launched with Bretagne. Four projects were selected in total, out of which 2 will be managed by Pays de la Loire.	n/a
France	Rhône-Alpes	Yes - 2015	Eight projects were selected for funding.	A second call was launched but results are still not available.
Germany	Bavaria	n/a	n/a	n/a

Country	Region	First call launched	Outcomes	Next steps
Germany	Rhine-Palat	Yes – Jan 2016	Seventeen applications received, out of which 10 were selected for funding.	n/a
Italy	Emilia-Rom	Yes – Dec 2015	Five calls were launched – selection procedure still on-going at the time of writing the report.	n/a
Italy	Lazio	No	n/a	n/a
Italy	Lombardy	No	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Slovenia	n/a	No	n/a	MA still working to develop the EIP, including implementation details. Preliminary call for expressions of interest launched in 2014 to test the interest for themes, projects and type of applicants. First calls for set-up and operation of OGs planned for the second half of 2016.
Spain	Aragon	n/a	n/a	n/a
Spain	Canary Isl	No		First call planned for October 2016
Spain	Castilla y Leon	n/a	n/a	n/a
Spain	Catalonia	Yes	Twenty-one applications received for the set-up of OGs, out of which 19 were approved Fifty-seven applications were received for projects, out of which 23 were approved.	n/a
Spain	Extremadura	n/a	n/a	n/a
Type 6				
Bulgaria	n/a	No	n/a	No date for first call for proposals set, MA expects to launch measure in 2017
Czech Republic	n/a	No	n/a	First call expected to be launched in Autumn 2016 (10 projects); second call expected in 2017 (10 projects)
France	Auvergne	Yes – 2016	Selection process on-going at the time of writing the report	n/a
France	Basse Nor	Yes – 2016	Selection process on-going at the time of writing the report	n/a
France	Bourgogne	Yes	Selection process on-going at the time of writing the report	n/a

Country	Region	First call launched	Outcomes	Next steps
France	Bretagne	Yes – 2015	First call launched with Pays de la Loire. Four projects were selected in total, out of which 2 will be managed by Bretagne	Second call launched in 2016
France	C-Val de L	No	n/a	One call planned per year between 2016 and 2019
France	Cham–Ard	No	n/a	n/a
France	Guadelou	Yes – 2016	Selection process on-going at the time of writing the report	n/a
France	Ile-de-Fra	n/a	n/a	n/a
France	Lang Rou	Yes	Calls launched in 2015 and 2016. First projects have been selected	n/a
France	Mayotte	n/a	n/a	n/a
France	PACA	Yes – 2016	Selection process on-going	n/a
France	Poit-Ch	n/a	n/a	n/a
Germany	Berl & Bra	Yes	Twenty-four projects went through the compulsory consultation process. Twelve proposals were then officially submitted out of which 6 will be officially approved.	Proposals for the second call were due on end May 2016. Given the positive experience of the first call, the MA allocated a higher budget of € 8 million. Two additional calls are planned for 2017 and 2018.
Italy	Fri-Ven-Giu	No	n/a	n/a
Italy	Marche	No	n/a	n/a
Italy	Molise	No	n/a	n/a
Italy	Puglia	No	n/a	First call planned for second half of 2016
Italy	Tuscany	Yes – May 2016	Not yet – applications under review	n/a
Italy	Umbria	No	n/a	First call expected to be launched in second half of 2016
Lithuania	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Annex to section 3: Answers to the evaluation study questions
Theme 1 - Internal coherence and relevance of EIP-related elements in RDPs
Table 29 – Documentary coherence according to the typology

RDP type	Summary of documentary coherence	Level of coherence
Type 1 (small and open)	Flanders The needs assessment refers to additional incentives for collaboration and innovation. Coherence is demonstrated through the priorities for measure 16 (co-operation), which are fully dedicated to innovation and linked to agricultural research and knowledge.	High
	Wales The needs assessment refers extensively to competitiveness, natural resources and innovation. The wide range of priorities considered strategic for measure 16 (co-operation) deal with farm modernisation, better organisation in the value chain, and protection of the environment.	High
Type 2 (medium and open)	Greece The needs assessment refers to a low level of technological development, insufficient human resources and the difficulty for small players to invest in R&D. Strategic priorities for measure 16 (co-operation) focus on knowledge transfer and farm modernisation.	High
	Andalusia The needs assessment refers to a wide range of identified needs that are matched to an extensive list of priorities for measure 16 (co-operation).	High
	England The needs assessment refers to insufficient collaboration and the limited dissemination of innovation; strategic priorities only partially match these very specific needs, through priorities for measure 16 (co-operation) on knowledge transfer and innovation, improving economic performance and competitiveness.	Intermediate
Type 3 (large and open)	Berlin-Brandenburg The needs assessment refers to more collaboration between practitioners and researchers. Priorities for measure 16 (co-operation) is focused on farm viability and innovation.	High
	Puglia The needs assessment refers to the insufficient relationship between practitioners and researchers. The strategic priorities for Measure 16 (co-operation) are innovation and cooperation in Rural Areas and farm modernisation.	High
	Sweden The needs assessment refers to innovation capacity, increased competitiveness and innovation dissemination. Stated priorities for measure 16 (co-operation) focus on farm modernisation, which implies only an intermediate level of coherence between needs and priorities.	Intermediate

RDP type	Summary of documentary coherence	Level of coherence
	<p>Scotland</p> <p>The needs assessment refers to fragmentation, difficulties to cooperate between practitioners and researchers and trouble adopting new technologies. Priorities for measure 16 (co-operation) focus on knowledge transfer, farm modernisation, competitiveness and risk management but also on priorities 4 and 5.</p>	High
	<p>Poland</p> <p>The needs assessment refers to insufficiency in innovation, weakness of the link between science and agriculture), with priorities for measure 16 (co-operation) focused on knowledge transfer, modernisation and competitiveness.</p>	High
<p>Type 4 (small and restrictive)</p>	<p>Midi-Pyrénées</p> <p>The needs assessment refers to a range of issues from competitiveness to improving the environment and include enhancing innovation. Strategic priorities for measure 16 (co-operation) focus on the relationship between the food chain and research, farm modernisation and priorities 4 (ecosystems) and 5 (climate change). This implies only an intermediate level of coherence.</p>	Intermediate
	<p>Veneto</p> <p>The needs assessment refers to redeveloping the population of farmers, farming methods, markets and on professional retraining and diversification. The priorities for measure 16 (co-operation) are coherent with this.</p>	High
	<p>Basque Country</p> <p>The needs assessment refers to competitiveness and growth of a local oriented economy, which is coherent with the priorities for measure 16 (co-operation) of enhancing productivity and innovation.</p>	High
<p>Type 5 (medium and restrictive)</p>	<p>Croatia</p> <p>The needs assessment refers to innovation and modernisation is made clear, with priorities for measure 16 (co-operation) treating all priorities.</p>	High
	<p>Rhône-Alpes</p> <p>The needs assessment refers, among numerous items, to innovation and improving the relationship between production and research. Leading from this, priorities for measure 16 (co-operation) are farm modernisation, food chain management, ecosystems and ICT</p>	High
	<p>Rhineland-Palatinate</p> <p>The needs assessment refers to the relationship between researchers and practitioners. Priorities for measure 16 (co-operation) include innovation, farm modernisation, climate change and local development. Coherence is at an intermediate level since it does not address knowledge exchange.</p>	Intermediate
	<p>Emilia Romagna</p> <p>The needs assessment refers to integrating farms, forestry holding and rural communities into innovation and knowledge networks. Chosen priorities for measure 16 (co-operation) are</p>	High

RDP type	Summary of documentary coherence	Level of coherence
	knowledge transfer and innovation, farm modernisation and food chain management, in addition to ecosystems and resource efficiency.	
	Catalonia The needs assessment refers to improving the R&D system, making a better knowledge transfer and training system for a farm advisory service and "rural galvanisation" and support for young farmers and local and short supply chain distribution. The priorities for measure 16 (co-operation) are: the cooperation between technological centres and companies to facilitate knowledge transfer, the horizontal and/or vertical cooperation to promote short market chain distribution, and cooperation to maintain biodiversity and protect the environment.	High
Type 6 (large and restrictive)	Bulgaria The needs assessment refers to promoting cooperation between farmers, processing companies and research centres, leading to priorities for measure 16 (co-operation) that are innovation, knowledge transfer, training, farm modernisation, food chain organisation and energy, greenhouse gas emission reduction.	High
	Britany The needs assessment refers to innovation, education, dissemination, reconciling agriculture and environmental protection, farm modernisation and finally protein crops development. The priorities measure 16 (co-operation) for addressing these needs are farms modernisation, innovation, cooperation between production and research, soils protection and renewable energy.	High

Source: Case studies

Table 30 - Level of coherence between the needs identified in the RDPs and the topics of the projects already started

Case study MS/region	RDP type	Topics of projects in progress	Needs identified	Level of coherence
Scotland (UK)	Type 3 (large and open)	4 projects. Topics = Live Lambs Project; Monitor Farm Program; Skinny Milk Project; Pig Production Efficiency Project/	1) Support the communities of Rural Scotland (to overcome diseconomies of scale and fragmentation through co-operation). 2) Support the Rural Businesses (to overcome the disconnect between research and practice)	Insufficient information on the projects to assess the level of coherence.
Midi-Pyrenees (France)	Type 4 (small and restrictive)	5 projects. Topics = robustness of lambs, varied flora in forage systems in highlands, performance of pig	12 needs: agricultural competitiveness; generation renewal; balanced territorial development; IT, water	High

Case study MS/region	RDP type	Topics of projects in progress	Needs identified	Level of coherence
		farms, soils practices, fruit production (trees).	management; organisation of the supply chain; local economic fabric; impact of extreme climatic events on forestry; innovation transfer; skills and knowledge of stakeholders; reduced greenhouse gas emission & carbon storage; and agricultural and forestry soils.	
Basque-Country (Spain)	Type 4 (small and restrictive)	4 projects. Topics = farm equipment, optimisation and competitiveness of cheese under PDO and organic production.	Competitiveness, development of the regional brand (Euskadi), quality schemes, local and short market chain distribution, and sustainability.	High
Rhône-Alpes (France)	Type 5 (medium and restrictive)	8 projects. Topics = agro-ecological transition, protein self-sufficiency of breeding farms, food governance in cities, re-localisation of agri-food systems, forest management, economic attractiveness of the region.	1) Support collective and innovative projects on targeted regional issues, which strengthen the links between economic actors and actors in the research, development and innovation sectors; 2) Disseminate a culture of innovation by accompanying its emergence and valorisation.	High
Rhineland-Palatinate (Germany)	Type 5 (medium and restrictive)	10 projects. Topics = biodiversity, organic breeding, protein crops, cleaning places for machines, soils and water management, grassland management for dairy cows, traditional fruit growing, digital application for agriculture.	Develop cooperative approaches and innovative solutions in agriculture and forestry.	High
Catalonia (Spain)	Type 5 (medium and restrictive)	23 projects. Topics covered include fruits, food industries, forestry, organic production, wine sector, olive oil sector, rice, orchard and apiculture. ¹⁰⁵	Promoting and boosting the R&D system, encouraging more training and knowledge exchange, encouraging advisory and network support services, improving agricultural	High

¹⁰⁵ Beneficiaries pointed out that OGs were providing an important forum for knowledge exchange between producers and researchers.

Case study MS/region	RDP type	Topics of projects in progress	Needs identified	Level of coherence
			competitiveness and economic galvanization of rural areas, promoting the integration of young farmers, local and short market chain distribution.	
Brittany (France)	Type 6 (large and restrictive)	1 project. Topic = protein self-sufficiency.	Section 5.5 of the RDP states that EIP shall contribute to protein self-sufficiency of farms.	High

Source: Case studies

Table 31 – Level of coherence between the RDPs (needs assessment and strategic priorities) and the expected implementation of the EIP in the MS/region where projects are not yet started, based on interviews with Managing Authorities

Case study MS/region	Typology	Needs assessment	Opinion / expectations of MA	Level of coherence with the RDPs
Belgium (Flanders)	Type 1 (small and open)	With the two new (sub) measures "operational groups under EIP" and "Project support for innovations in agriculture", the Flemish government wants to give additional incentives to collaboration and innovation.	It is intended to provide a flexible, small-scale mechanisms to allow small groups of (or even individual) farmers to seek solutions to practical problems they face. It is well-aligned with other innovation measures in the region and in the EU, and is positioned well to make research more bottom-up.	High
Wales (UK)	Type 1 (small and open)	EIP is broad and is intended to address a number of the EU Commission's challenge areas, including: 1) improving competitiveness and resource efficiency 2) safeguarding soils and natural resources 3) promoting managerial innovation and creating new technological opportunities.	Priorities of EIP Wales match exactly the needs assessed in the RDP.	High
Greece	Type 2 (medium and open)	1) Low degree of integration of innovation and scarce demand for research and innovation services in agriculture. 2) Low degree of integration of production technology, which is closely linked to problems of low production value and limited added value of farming in Greece. 3) Unfavourable structure of human resources in the rural development sector in terms of education (lack of formal training and specialised skills) and age (ageing agricultural population). 4) Market deficiencies including a limited critical mass of companies of sufficient size that could invest in R&D for the production of high added-value products and services. These deficiencies have encouraged the promotion of partnerships to develop new products, practices, processes and technologies.	The two broad themes identified by the Managing Authority effectively correspond to and are in line with the strategic and operational objectives of the RDP.	High

Evaluation study of the implementation of the EIP

Case study MS/region	Typology	Needs assessment	Opinion / expectations of MA	Level of coherence with the RDPs
Andalusia (Spain)	Type 2 (medium and open)	Innovation is understood as a horizontal tool for assessing several needs in the region, including: effectiveness of advisory services, improving access to credit and the quality of life in the rural sector, farm competitiveness, encouraging the innovative attitude of stakeholders, and improving the management of water quality.	Innovation is perceived as a cross-cutting tool to answer several needs: competitiveness of farms, improved life quality in the rural sector, increased training and knowledge transfer, development of local and short market chain distribution, and agricultural sustainability. EIP programming is seen as an appropriate answer to the priorities identified in the RDPs.	High
England (UK)	Type 2 (medium and open)	The English RDP states that the EIP is intended to address two market failures: 1) A free-rider problem - the full benefits of research and development investments typically exceed the returns for individual businesses because, for example, over time they extend to competitors as workers move on and expertise is disseminated more broadly. Therefore, there is generally a role for government in funding public research and development programmes 2) Market failures that prevent the spread of innovation from 'early adopters' through the industry, resulting in a failure to adopt new technologies and practices that would impact positively on agricultural productivity and competitiveness.	Although the MA thinks that EIP is adapted to respond to innovation needs in farms, there are question about how to reach most of the farmers and about the dissemination tools.	Intermediate
Puglia (Italy)	Type 3 (large and open)	1) The level of coordination and governance of the actors forming the regional knowledge system in agriculture remains low. 2) Agricultural, forestry and agri-food businesses should be better integrated in the research landscape. 3) There is a need to develop technological knowledge that is adequate to the regional context.	The aims of the EIP-related measures are coherent with the objectives of the Rural Development Programmes.	High
Sweden	Type 3 (large and open)	The lack of innovation capacity in rural areas and limited dissemination and uptake of applied research has been identified as a weakness in	The implementation methods fully match the expressed needs.	High

Case study MS/region	Typology	Needs assessment	Opinion / expectations of MA	Level of coherence with the RDPs
		<p>Sweden by the RDP and forms part of the key rationale for rural development strategies. The RDP makes it possible to support cooperation through the EIP between innovation stakeholders such as entrepreneurs, advisors and researchers to develop new products with the aim to improve the competitiveness of agriculture and development of rural entrepreneurship. The EIP also is seen to fill a gap in the commercialisation of innovation, where other innovation support measures have not worked. The EIP will allow Operation Groups (OGs) to obtain funding for time spent developing ideas, it will also provide a support function consisting of expert advice and necessary networks to disseminate.</p>		
<p>Poland</p>	<p>Type 3 (large and open)</p>	<p>The agricultural sector ranks significantly lower in terms of innovation in relation to other sectors of the Polish economy. This is reflected in a number of indicators, including low productivity growth in relation to land and labour, the share of expenditure for fixed assets, the average age and education level of farmers, and Internet access in rural areas. The Polish food industry is also low in innovations, as proven by the low level of innovation expenditure in the value-added of sales, the dominance of expenditure for fixed assets in the structure of innovation expenditure, and the low interest in gaining new knowledge or introducing new products to the market. Connections between science and agriculture are also traditionally weak in Poland. The agricultural sector is poorly organised and does not communicate its needs effectively; on the other hand, research results usually cannot be easily applied in practice.</p>	<p>Even though the implementation process is still in its early stage, Polish choices generally answer to the challenge of improving R&D and technology in the agricultural and food production sectors.</p> <p>The limit is that the provisions made by Polish authorities may give advantage to larger organisations and companies, rather than to a greater variety of stakeholders, and thus it may miss the target of a large dissemination.</p>	<p>Intermediate</p>

Case study MS/region	Typology	Needs assessment	Opinion / expectations of MA	Level of coherence with the RDPs
Berlin-Brandenburg (Germany)	Type 3 (large and open)	The RDP identifies several needs as regards innovation in the agricultural and forestry sectors (development of new technological processes and products) through a better connection and stronger links between Research and practitioners. In that respect, the EIP represents the main channel towards innovation.	In Berlin-Brandenburg, the EIP initiative is widely acknowledged as a relevant tool to foster experiments in the agricultural sector. The Managing Authority has indeed decided to put into place an innovation support service to maintain its attractiveness to potential beneficiaries while the administrative burden of the EIP, the length of OGs selection procedure may on the contrary lead to fewer applications.	High
Veneto (Italy)	Type 4 (small and restrictive)	In Veneto, the agricultural sector faces important inertia behaviours. There is a need to orient farmers (especially young farmers) towards an innovation-oriented approach. Therefore, the RDP puts the emphasis on the necessary introduction of new production methods or products, new forms of provisions, the access to a new market, the reorganization or productive reconversion and/or production diversification.	The aims of the EIP-related measures are coherent with the objectives of the Rural Development Programmes.	High
Emilia-Romagna (Italy)	Type 5 (medium and restrictive)	A significant proportion of agricultural holdings as well as rural communities are seen as not adequately integrated in the innovation and knowledge networks. Need for active participation by farmers. Need for innovation in the forestry sector.	Emilia-Romagna Region representatives perceived clear benefits of this initiative favouring incentives for innovation in rural areas through cooperative projects. According to the different stakeholders interviewed, indeed, the main benefit of EIP to the RDPs relates to the emphasis put on the bottom-up approach	High

Evaluation study of the implementation of the EIP

Case study MS/region	Typology	Needs assessment	Opinion / expectations of MA	Level of coherence with the RDPs
Croatia	Type 5 (medium and restrictive)	<p>The RDP recognises that the knowledge of and access to innovation, including innovative processes, is very low in the agricultural and food-processing sector in Croatia. The setting-up and operation of EIP Operational Groups under Measure 16 is intended to reduce the gap between agricultural practices and research by promoting innovative solutions and innovations in practice.</p> <p>The objective of Measure 16 is thus to encourage cooperation and the exchange of information on existing and new processes, procedures and technologies in the production and processing of agricultural products. This is expected to improve the economic performance of the agricultural sector in Croatia.</p>	All projects will be potentially effective and coherent with the broad objective of improving the economic performance of the agricultural sector.	Unknown
Bulgaria	Type 6 (large and restrictive)	<p>To promote innovation in agriculture, it is necessary to ensure synergies between the stakeholders responsible for the creation or transfer of innovation and the end-users (farmers and foresters, processing industry, local authorities). Bulgaria's participation in the EIP is meant to facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge and specific technical solutions, for instance through the creation of the Operational Groups, which include farmers and foresters, the processing industry, as well R&D structures in the country.</p>	The EIP fills a gap not covered by other initiatives at national level, but it's still too early to assess how well it complements other parts of the RDP and CAP. The lack of organisation forms a significant brake to the implementation. There is no innovation broker and no NRN.	Unknown

Source: Case studies

Table 32 – Perceived relevance of the EIP according to key innovation actors

Underlying perception of EIP relevance	Views expressed (and RDP of interviewee)	Main ideas
The EIP is highly relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus on multi-actor innovation gives new opportunities for farmers (Andalusia – Type 1; Midi-Pyrénées - Type 4, Basque Country - Type 6) • The EIP fills a niche that other programmes do not address (England - Type 2) • The EIP brings new possibilities for farms to access research findings (Puglia - Type 3) • The 'bottom-up' approach is welcome (Sweden - Type 3, Emilia-Romagna - Type 5) • It is a well-designed tool (Catalonia – Type 5) • Successful and inclusive consultation during the design phase (Rhône-Alpes - Type 5) • The ability for all types of innovation actors to participate in OGs distinguishes it from other initiatives (Wales - Type 1); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EIP is a new tool that provides new opportunities for farmers; • The EIP is inclusive, due to the bottom-up approach; • The EIP is likely to foster new connections between farming and research
The EIP's relevance remains unclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited amounts of funding for each project might limit relevance (Flanders - Type 1); • The administrative burden on project leaders might be a barrier to participation (Greece - Type 2, Flanders - Type 1, Sweden - Type 3, Croatia - Type 1, Bulgaria - Type 6) • Small entities could be disadvantaged, due to onerous administrative burdens (Midi-Pyrénées - Type 4, Croatia - Type 1) • Due to the large maximum size of OGs, funding could mainly go to large companies and institutions (Poland - Type 3, Bulgaria - Type 6) • Payment conditions, delays in payment and control procedures could discourage farmers (Midi-Pyrénées - Type 4, Brittany - Type 6, Germany - Types 3 and 5, Basque Country - Type 6, Catalonia - Type 5) • A lack of consultation in the design stage means the parameters might not meet farmers' needs (Scotland – Type 2, Sweden - Type 3, Poland -Type 3) • There is still confusion about how the EIP will be implemented, making it hard to judge relevance (Scotland - Type 2, Poland - Type 3) • There are doubts about the capacity of stakeholders (particularly famers) to set up and run projects (Greece - Type 2) • The definition of 'innovative' is hard to pin down when setting up projects (Berlin-Brandenburg – Type 3, Rhineland-Palatinate – Type 5) • Strategies for disseminating the results of OGs are not clear enough to assume success (Puglia, Poland and Berlin- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EIP's processes and procedures could undermine relevance for stakeholders, particularly farmers and small entities • The EIP's parameters are in some cases not clear or well-defined enough for stakeholders to ascertain relevance

Underlying perception of EIP relevance	Views expressed (and RDP of interviewee)	Main ideas
	Brandenburg – Type 3, Rhineland-Palatinate – Type 5, Bulgaria – Type 6)	

Source: Case studies

Table 33 – VCS choices and selected research project

Region	Type	VCS in the Member State	Granted projects
Basque Country, Spain	Type 6 (large and restrictive)	Beef, Fruit and Vegetables, Grain Legumes, Milk , Nuts, Protein crops, Rice, Sheep & Goat, Sugar Beet	4 projects were selected for funding. The themes covered included farm equipment, optimisation and competitiveness of cheese under PDO and organic production.
Midi-Pyrenees, France	Type 4 (small and restrictive)	Beef, Cereals, Fruit and Vegetables, Hemp, Hops, Milk, Protein Crops, Seeds, Sheep and Goat, Starch Potato	5 projects. Topics = robustness of lambs , varied flora in forage systems in highlands, performance of pig farms, soils practices, fruit production (trees) .
Scotland, UK	Type 3 (large and open)	UK choices: Beef, Sheep and Goat	4 projects. Topics = Live Lambs Project ; Monitor Farm Program; Skinny Milk Project; Pig Production Efficiency Project/
Rhône-Alpes, France	Type 5 (medium and restrictive)	Beef, Cereals, Fruit and Vegetables, Hemp, Hops, Milk, Protein Crops , Seeds, Sheep and Goat, Starch Potato	8 projects approved: agro-ecological transition, protein self-sufficiency of breeding farms , food governance in cities, re-localisation of agri-food systems, forest management, and economic attractiveness of the region.
Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany	Type 5 (medium and restrictive)	No VCS in Germany	10 OGs were selected, reflecting very various thematic: biodiversity, organic breeding, protein crops, cleaning places for machines, soils and water management, grassland management for dairy cows, traditional fruit growing, digital application for agriculture
Catalonia, Spain	Type 5 (medium and restrictive)	Beef, Cereals, F&V , Hemp, Hops, Milk, Protein Crops, Seeds, Sheep and Goat, Starch Potato	23 were approved. The themes covered fruits , food industries, forestry, organic production, wine sector, olive oil sector, rice, orchard and apiculture.
Brittany, France	Type 6 (large and restrictive)	Beef, Cereals, F&V, Hemp, Hops, Milk, Protein Crops , Seeds, Sheep and Goat, Starch Potato	1 call was implemented in 2015, about protein self-sufficiency .

Theme 3 – EU added value of the EIP network, effectiveness and efficiency of the EU level and national networks

The countries and regions of the EU are taking different approaches to networking for the EIP. The table below presents a brief overview of the approaches we identified as part of the case study fieldwork.

Country/Region	National/Regional EIP networking mechanism
Belgium, Flanders	A new entity called the Flemish EIP Network has been established. It is made up of the NRN (Vlaams Ruraal Netwerk), the MA and a Platform for Agricultural Research. It acts as contact point for the EIP network.
Bulgaria	A National Coordination Network for Innovation (CNI) will be created. It will be managed by the Management Unit of the NRN.
Croatia	The NRN plans to establish an EIP Subcommittee . Currently, the NRN is the contact point for the EIP network and is responsible for EIP networking activities in the country.
France (Brittany, Midi-Pyrénées, Rhône-Alpes)	The NRN established an EIP Committee . Also, the RRN in Midi-Pyrénées will implement an EIP Committee too. In Rhône-Alpes, the EIP is supported by the establishment of a new partnership for Research, Innovation and Development (AGRI RID).
Germany (Berlin-Brandenburg, Rhineland-Palatinate)	The NRN is the contact point for the EIP network and is responsible for EIP networking activities in the country.
Greece	The NRN is the contact point for the EIP network and is responsible for EIP networking activities in the country.
Italy	The NRN is the contact point for the EIP network and is responsible for EIP networking activities in the country.
Poland	The NRN created a dedicated EIP network called the Agricultural and Rural Innovation Network . It is the contact point for the EIP network and delivers agricultural advisory support for innovation through a network of regional rural advisory centres.
Spain (Basque Country, Catalonia, Andalusia)	The NRN plans to establish a national EIP network . Currently, both the NRN and RRNs are the contact point for the EIP network and are responsible for EIP networking activities in the country.
Sweden	There will be special Innovation Network within the NRN that will be the link between the EIP Network and the Swedish OGs.

Country/Region		National/Regional EIP networking mechanism
United Kingdom (England, Wales)	Scotland,	There is an informal national EIP network formed by EIP leads from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. They meet to share their EIP experiences. They have a shared Huddle page to share lessons, discuss possible cross-border (within the UK) projects and coordinate UK representation at EU-level EIP events. But formally, the NRN and RRNs are the contact point for the EIP network and are responsible for EIP networking activities in the country.

Theme 4 – external coherence with other policies

The tables below present detailed information on Horizon 2020 calls for proposals that informed the answer to evaluation theme 4.

The first Societal Challenge 2 Work Programme (2014-2015)

As reflected in the table below, the second call (2015) included twelve priorities of interest to agriculture, food and forestry, covering a broad variety of issues, under two different calls, Sustainable Food Security and Innovative, Sustainable and Inclusive Bio-economy. Seven out of the 12 relevant Horizon 2020 topics supported projects with a multi-actor approach, resulting in over 25 projects selected under the relevant 2015 calls. In addition, five thematic networks for a total of around €10 million were also selected for funding. The themes for the five networks were not pre-defined and could for instance be linked to sectors or products (e.g. arable crops, fruits, vegetables, pigs) or to a broad range of cross-cutting subjects such as crop rotation, certain farming practices, energy, eco-system services, implementation of a directive, social services, bio-based products, and short supply chains.

Table 34: Agriculture and forestry related priorities in H2020 2015 call

Call	Priority	Indicative budget
Sustainable Food Security (SFS)	Assessing sustainability of terrestrial livestock production (SFS-1C-2015)	€7 million
	Assessing soil-improving cropping systems (SFS-2B-2015)	€7 million
	Strategies for crop productivity, stability and quality (SFS-5-2015)	€15 million
	Management and sustainable use of genetic resources (SFS-7B-2015)	€18 million
	Resource-efficient eco-innovative food production and processing (SFS-8-2015)	€17 million
	Biological contamination of crops and the food chain (SFS-13-2015)	€10 million
	Authentication of food products (SFS-14B-2015)	€0.5 million
	Small farms but global markets: the role of small and family farms in food	€5 million

	and nutrition security (FNS) (SFS-18-2015)	
	Sustainable food chains through public policies: the cases of the EU quality policy and of public sector food procurement (SFS-20-2015)	€7 million
Innovative, Sustainable and Inclusive Bio-economy (ISIB)	Closing the research and innovation divide: the crucial role of innovation support services and knowledge exchange (ISIB-2-2015)	€10 million
	Unlocking the growth potential of rural areas through enhanced governance and social innovation (ISIB-3-2015)	€5.5 million
	Improved data and management models for sustainable forestry - Improved forest management models (ISIB-4B 2015)	€4 million

Source: Evaluation team, based on EIP brochure on funding opportunities under Horizon 2020 Calls 2015

Thematic networks and multi-actor projects

The table below presents an overview of multi-actor projects and thematic networks funded under H2020 2014 and 2105 calls for proposals. As shown, the majority of projects (in particular those selected under the 2015 call) have only started earlier this year (between February and April 2016), so it is still too early to identify any results. However, an analysis of the descriptions of objectives for each project on the CORDIS database (summarized under key elements in the table) suggests that all the projects funded are expected to provide innovative ideas that could potentially feed into the EIP process.

Table 35: Multi-actor projects (MA) and thematic networks (TN) funded under H2020 2014 and 2015 calls

Project acronym, name and type	EU budget	Kick-off / end dates	Key elements
Priority: Genetics and nutrition and alternative feed sources for terrestrial livestock production (SFS-01A-2014)			
Feed-a-Gene: Adapting the feed, the animal and the feeding techniques to improve the efficiency and sustainability of monogastric livestock production systems (MA)	€8,999,544	03/2015 to 02/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Participatory approach · Strong dissemination
Priority: External nutrient inputs (SFS-02A-2014)			
FATIMA: Farming Tools for external nutrient Inputs and water Management (MA)	€7,966,697	03/2015 to 02/2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Participatory approach · Focus on end users
Priority: Soil quality and function (SFS-04-2014)			
LANDMARK: LAND Management: Assessment, Research, Knowledge base (MA)	€4,999,663	05/2015 to 10/2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Participatory approach · Focus on end users

Project acronym, name and type	EU budget	Kick-off / end dates	Key elements
Priority: Traditional resources for agricultural diversity and the food chain (SFS-07A-2014)			
DIVERSIFOOD: Embedding crop diversity and networking for local high quality food systems (MA)	€3,429,908	03/2015 to 02/2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Participatory approach · Focus on end users · Strong dissemination
Priority: Closing the research and innovation divide: the crucial role of innovation support services and knowledge exchange (ISIB-02-2014)			
WINETWORK: Network for the exchange and transfer of innovative knowledge between European wine-growing regions to increase the productivity and sustainability of the sector (TN)	€1,999,221	04/2015 to 07/2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Participatory approach · Focus on end users · Strong dissemination
OK-Net Arable: Organic Knowledge Network Arable (TN)	€1,936,627	03/2015 to 02/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Participatory approach · Focus on end users · Strong dissemination
Priority: Native and alien pests in agriculture and forestry (SFS-03A-2014)			
EMPHASIS: Effective Management of Pests and Harmful Alien Species - Integrated Solutions (MA)	€6,526,038	03/2015 to 02/2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Participatory approach · Focus on end users · Strong dissemination
Priority: Sustainability of terrestrial livestock (SFS-1C-2015)			
iSAGE: Innovation for Sustainable Sheep and Goat Production in Europe (MA)	€6,996,922	03/2016 to 02/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 18 industry representatives · Participatory approach · Applicable outcomes · Strong dissemination
Priority: Soil cropping improving systems (SFS-2B -2015)			
SOILCARE: Soil Care for profitable and sustainable crop production in Europe (MA)	€6,999,993	03/2016 to 02/2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Applicability of soil-improving cropping systems · Multiple audiences targeted · Strong dissemination
Priority: Crop productivity strategies (Genetics x Environment x Management) (SFS-5-2015)			
NEURICE: New commercial EUropean RICE harbouring salt tolerance alleles to protect the rice sector against climate change and apple snail invasion (MA)	€4,608,975	03/2016 to 02/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Research-oriented

Project acronym, name and type	EU budget	Kick-off / end dates	Key elements
GoodBerry: Improving the stability of high-quality traits of berry in different environments and cultivation systems for the benefit of European farmers and consumers (MA)	€4,868,332	03/2016 to 02/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Participatory approach · Research + industry · Applicable outcomes · Multiple audiences targeted · Strong dissemination
TomGEM: A holistic multi-actor approach towards the design of new tomato varieties and management practices to improve yield and quality in the face of climate change (MA)	€4,993,506	03/2016 to 02/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Participatory approach · Research + industry · Applicable outcomes · Strong dissemination
1 Priority: Biological contamination of crops and food chain (SFS-13-2015)			
MyToolBox: Safe Food and Feed through an Integrated ToolBox for Mycotoxin Management (MA)	€4,997,660	03/2016 to 02/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Research, farmers, industry and policy-makers · Applicable outcomes (focus on end users)
MycoKey: Integrated and innovative key actions for mycotoxin management in the food and feed chain (MA)	€5,000,000	04/2016 to 03/2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Research, industry and associations · Applicable outcomes (focus on end users)
Priority: Sustainable food chains: EU quality policy and public sector procurement (SFS-20-2015)			
Strength2Food: Strengthening European Food Chain Sustainability by Quality and Procurement Policy (MA)	€6,904,226	03/2016 to 02/2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Research + communications + industry + stakeholder orgs · Applicable outcomes · Strong dissemination
Smart Farming Technology: Farm Management Information Systems, Precision Agriculture and Agriculture automation and robotics (ISIB-2-2015)			
Smart-AKIS: European Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) towards innovation-driven research in Smart Farming Technology (TN)	€1,997,731	03/2016 to 08/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Easily accessible material · Strong dissemination · Links with EIP (common format)
Support HNV farmlands through knowledge and innovation (ISIB-2-2015)			
HNV-Link: High Nature Value Farming: Learning, Innovation and Knowledge (TN)	€2,230,218	04/2016 to 03/2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · EIP FG + new partners · Focus on end-users · Clear links with EIP

Project acronym, name and type	EU budget	Kick-off / end dates	Key elements
Valorisation of biomass side-streams from agriculture and forest (ISIB-2-2015)			
AGRIFORVALOR: Bringing added value to agriculture and forest sectors by closing the research and innovation divide (TN)	€1,997,416	03/2016 to 08/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Research, practice, industry, policy-makers and associations · Applicable outcomes · Clear links with EIP
Data and sensor driven decision making on dairy farms (ISIB-2-2015)			
4D4F: Data Driven Dairy Decisions 4 Farmers (TN)	€1,999,671	03/2016 to 02/2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Research, farmers and industry · Applicable outcomes · Strong dissemination · Clear links with EIP
Practice-based innovations in dairy farming: resource efficiency, Biodiversity, Animal care, and Socio-economic resilience (ISIB-2-2015)			
EuroDairy: A Europe-wide thematic network supporting a sustainable future for EU dairy farmers (TN)	€1,997,237	02/2016 to 01/2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Participatory approach · Research, farmers and industry · Applicable outcomes · Strong dissemination · Clear links with EIP
Fruit: cultivar development, minimise residues, storage and fruit quality, sustainability of production systems (ISIB-2-2015)			
EUFruit: EU Fruit Network (TN)	€1,734,237	03/2016 to 02/2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Applicable outcomes · Strong dissemination
Improved forest management models (ISIB-4b-2015)			
ALTERFOR: Alternative models and robust decision-making for future forest management (MA)	€3,999,998	04/2016 to 09/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Focus on end users (forest managers) · Applicable outcomes · Strong dissemination
Optimize water and nutrient use efficiency: dbase on innovative technologies and practices for fertigation of horticultural crops (WATER-4b-2015)			
FERTINNOWA: Transfer of INNOvative techniques for sustainable Water use in FERTigated crops (TN)	€2,999,273	01/2016 to 12/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Participatory approach · Focus on end users · Strong dissemination

ANNEX B: CASE STUDY SUMMARIES

The following annexes provide summaries of the 20 regions within eleven countries that were examined during the evaluation as part of in-depth case studies. The case studies were each based on an analysis of relevant documentation (particularly RDPs), about eight qualitative interviews per RDP and (as applicable) the findings of other research conducted for the evaluation. The summaries serve to highlight the headline findings and conclusions that can be drawn from each case study.

1. Belgium (Flanders)

Summary of key findings

This case study covers Flanders, Belgium. The findings are based on a review of documentation and eight face-to-face and telephone consultations during May 2016. As of end June 2016, Flanders had decided to award funding for its first five Operational Groups (OGs), with a view to kick-off by September 2016.

Relevance and coherence of EIP design

The evidence gathered during the case study suggests that the EIP as implemented in Flanders **addresses a specific need**: research in Flanders does not always address the practical needs of the agricultural sector, but EIP is designed to make the system more bottom-up. It is also coherent, providing flexible, small-scale mechanisms to allow small groups of (or even individual) farmers to seek solutions to practical problems they face. However, the interviews suggest a lack of clarity among stakeholders about the link between EIP and other EU policies, such as Horizon 2020, and how exactly these different levels of programming interact with each other.

The role of innovation support and networking

There is a well-established innovation system in Flanders, comprising Universities, Instituut voor Landbouw-en Visserijonderzoek (ILVO, the Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research), experimental research stations and the Platform for Agricultural research. EIP complements this system, and other innovation measures, by addressing a specific issue – the lack of farmer-driven research in the region – by encouraging more bottom-up influence on research topics.

The Vlaams Ruraal Netwerk (VRN, Flemish Rural Network) role is to facilitate and enhance rural development in Flanders by bringing rural development matters to a wider audience, identifying good practices and disseminating these, as well as more general and subject-related information. However, feedback from stakeholders suggests that the VRN has not been very visible in Flanders and farmers' lack of knowledge regarding EIP may be, in part, a result of this. But this may also be because EIP is still in its early stages of implementation.

The EIP Network (EU-level) Focus Groups have had positive feedback for providing important networking opportunities, as well as providing a platform for useful discussions and developing recommendations for relevant research topics.

Preliminary assessment of EIP's likely effectiveness and efficiency

While the measure looks good on paper, it is **too early to tell** whether it will be effective in practice, given the questions raised above and the fact that it is still relatively early in the implementation phase (OGs have not yet kicked off).

A number of **concerns have been raised about the potential effectiveness** of the measure, the most important of which is around the scale of funding available. This is the key limitation of EIP effectiveness in Flanders; €30,000 per OG is too small to finance anything other than preliminary

discussions between farmers and other partners. Although other funding is available at the domestic level, this involves a separate application process.

In addition, there is still a lack of awareness among farmers – several stakeholders considered that only around 10% of farmers and SMEs in Flanders were aware of the EIP measure and its potential benefits. Even for farmers who know about it, the lack of pre-financing possibilities poses a problem. Stakeholders feel that this will discourage farmers and SMEs from incurring the expenses necessary to propose research topics, due to their inability to access the requisite funds.

There is also limited capability to manage the **administrative side** of the measure. This relates to a perception that EIP has a high administrative burdensome, leading to a sense that small actors cannot write OG applications that meet the selection criteria as competently as larger ones.

Finally, the **lack of OG coordination at the EU-level** also seemed likely to act as a brake on the effectiveness of the EIP in Flanders. For a region in a small country with a lot of international neighbours in close proximity, there is demand for an OG system that is more conducive to cross-border collaborations. While EIP Network FGs could potentially provide a platform for discussions at this level, there is no coherent mechanism and a lack of funding to deliver across borders, despite the fact that many different regions will be affected by the same problems.

Together, these reasons contribute to a sense that OGs are **unlikely to be farmer-led** and that the beneficiaries of EIP funding will be larger-scale actors, such as research organisations and institutions, who may use OG funding to further their own research agendas.

2. Bulgaria

Summary of key findings

This case study covers the whole of Bulgaria. The findings are based on a review of documentation and ten face-to-face and telephone consultations, as well as a focus group conducted in May 2016. As of June 2016, Bulgaria was in the initial stages of drafting the ordinances for implementing the measures of the European Innovation Partnership "Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability" (EIP). The first call for setting-up Operational Groups (OGs) in Bulgaria is currently not expected to take place before mid-2017.

Relevance and coherence of EIP design

The findings of the field work suggest that the **EIP is highly relevant in the Bulgarian context**. Innovation is considered necessary to enhance the competitiveness of an agricultural sector that lags behind those of many other EU Member States. The funding available for OGs under the **EIP is very attractive** to potential applicants because there are no similar national initiatives which could support the establishment of partnerships between such diverse stakeholder groups in the context of innovation in the agricultural sector in Bulgaria.

Interviewees were positive on the modalities chosen by the Bulgarian authorities for the setting up of OGs, such as the requirement to engage farmers and foresters along with the food-processing industry and R&D organisations in Bulgaria and the two-step approach to OGs. The consulted stakeholders thought that the OGs as envisaged have the potential to address their needs and are conducive to the achievement of the EIP's objectives such as the exchange of information, the transfer of knowledge and the development of specific technical solutions and innovations in agriculture. More specifically, the introduction of this measure appears to have sparked **an interest among the stakeholders** who see significant potential of the EIP in the modernisation and overall development of the agriculture sector in Bulgaria. However, an element of concern for stakeholders **was the limited number of OGs (20 in total) to be supported through the programming period**. Overall, stakeholders would have preferred a larger number of OGs with smaller budgets.

While the EIP was found to be relevant as it fills a policy gap on the national level, the implementing rules are yet to be drafted and approved. This meant it was not possible to assess in concrete terms how well it is likely to complement other parts of the Rural Development Plan (RDP) and Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and other EU innovation approaches. In any case, given the absence of innovation culture in the agricultural sector in Bulgaria, it does not seem likely that the EIP would contradict any of these initiatives.

The role of innovation support and networking

There is currently **no National Rural Network (NRN) in Bulgaria**. This jeopardises the potential of the measure for the time being, as the NRN would normally play a pivotal role in the facilitation of networking between stakeholder groups and the formation of partnerships. The absence of an active NRN adds to the importance of the role to be played by the MA in supporting stakeholders and encouraging buy-in of the measure beyond managing its administrative aspects. In terms of brokering, interviewed stakeholders suggested that an important role should be played either by the National Agriculture Advisory Service (NAAS) or by the effective use of existing specialised services in the research institutes and agricultural faculties in universities. Other organisations (such as private consultancies) have not been highly involved in the EIP in Bulgaria so far. While some reported having been consulted in the preparatory phases of the measure, other interviewed stakeholders said they are unlikely to engage with the EIP until further clarity is shed on its implementation.

Preliminary assessment of EIP's likely effectiveness and efficiency

There are **high expectations** of the benefits that Bulgaria's participation in the EIP could bring to innovation in the agriculture sector and hopes are that it will be conducive to the further development of the sector.

However, the current **lack of organisation and preparedness for the EIP** forms a significant obstacle to the success of the measure, as there appears to be no capability at national level to create the linkages between the interests of different stakeholders. Undeveloped structures and institutions have made it difficult to carry out the activities needed to promote and support the EIP to date. Wider contextual factors, such as the lack of basic financing for NGOs and research institutes, have compounded this problem.

The small number of planned OGs and their potentially large budgets were not broadly supported by stakeholders. In order to encourage a bottom-up approach, stakeholders would have preferred a larger number of OGs with smaller budgets which they thought would be more suitable to the sector in Bulgaria. Potential OG participants also noted that they hoped for a streamlined and simplified application procedure. They thought this was essential to attract the private sector to the measure. In response, the MA stated the modalities chosen for the application and selection procedures would be as streamlined as much as possible.

The MA is planning to launch the first call for OG projects in the course of 2017 and stakeholders have already indicated interest in participating, which suggests they consider the measure as well-suited to their needs. There are indications that OGs would potentially be set up and funded following the first call for proposals. In any case, the implementation of the EIP during this initial programming period could pave the way for the development of an innovation culture in the agricultural sector in Bulgaria and set the scene for a more significant take-up of the measure during the next programming period.

3. Croatia

Summary of key findings

This case study covers the planned implementation of EIP in Croatia. The findings are based on a review of documentation and interviews with eight stakeholders during May 2016. At the time of the fieldwork, **Croatia's planned approach to EIP implementation had not been finalised**. The Managing Authority had carried out some preparatory communications work to promote the measure and invited expressions of interest from actors interested in forming Operational Groups. A draft ordinance is expected to be released for consultation in mid-June with the first call for proposals foreseen for September 2016.

Relevance and coherence of EIP design

In Croatia, the EIP will be implemented through Measure 16 on Cooperation, and particularly Sub-measure 16.1 providing support for the setting up and operation of Operational Groups (OGs) of the EIP for agricultural productivity and sustainability. As of early June 2016, Croatia was still in the initial stages of drafting the ordinance for implementing the measures of EIP. But in principle, **all categories of stakeholders consulted welcomed the introduction of the measure**. The Managing Authority (MA) appears to have adopted an interactive approach for the programming of the EIP, encouraging stakeholders to submit ideas for assessment and planning to release the draft ordinance for consultation.

There are high expectations for the benefits that Croatia's participation in the EIP can bring to innovation in the agriculture sector. In the view of stakeholders, there is no comparable measure in the Croatian RDP (or, indeed, elsewhere in the Croatian innovation landscape) that would be conducive to the creation of partnerships between these very different categories of organisations.

The role of innovation support and networking

The role of Croatia's agricultural Advisory Service will likely be key for the success of the EIP. The service plans to play a role in several aspects of the measure's implementation: publicising the EIP and call for proposals, identifying potential members of operational groups through its existing network; providing technical advice on proposals; and playing an active role as a member of future Operational Groups.

The active engagement of the National Rural Network (NRN) in Croatia is promising for the likely success of the EIP. **The Croatian NRN is set to play an active role in supporting stakeholders** and encouraging buy-in of the measure. And, at a later stage, the NRN will also have an important role disseminating findings. The involvement of other organisations, including the Paying Agency and Managing Authority, will also be important for the success of the EIP in Croatia.

Preliminary assessment of EIP's likely effectiveness and efficiency

The overall conclusion of the case study is that **the funding available under the EIP is likely to be attractive to potential applicants** because there are no similar initiatives in Croatia. When consulted on their views about the key parameters of the OGs (so far as these are currently known), most interviewees agreed that *in theory* the plans for implementation of the EIP in Croatia were suitable to their needs and conducive to achieving the objectives of the measure.

Potential OG participants noted they **hoped for a streamlined and simplified application procedure**. They thought this was essential to attract the private sector to the measure. Croatia has chosen not to implement cross-border OGs, at least not during the first call, preferring to 'pilot' the measure in-country before reaching out to partners beyond its borders.

4. France

Summary of key findings

This case study covers three French regions, namely Brittany (Bretagne), Midi-Pyrénées and Rhône-Alpes. The findings are based on a review of documentation and 30 face-to-face and telephone consultations during April and May 2016. The EAFRD budget for the EIP is EUR 4.6m in Rhône-Alpes, EUR 6m in Brittany and EUR 9m in Midi-Pyrénées. Each of these regions already launched EIP calls for projects and have selected the first round of projects. Each region is also taking a substantially different approach to the EIP.

Relevance and coherence of EIP design

The EIP is positively perceived by stakeholders due to its bottom-up approach, focus on partnership, ability to hone in on issues of key concern and importance given to the dissemination of results.

In **Brittany**, the Managing Authorities have opted for **large projects, with pre-defined themes**, for the first call, implemented with the neighbouring Region Pays-de-La-Loire. This has been in preparation since 2012, with the on-going involvement of stakeholders. A different approach is being taken for the second call (in progress as of June 2016).

Midi-Pyrénées is taking a more open approach to the EIP, with no pre-defined topics in the first call which was launched in 2015. It is perceived as a way to create new synergies thanks to a **bottom-up approach**. This programme's flexibility has been appreciated so far.

In **Rhône-Alpes**, the EIP is characterised by its high degree of integration with regional funding structures. Based on extensive consultation during the design phase, it has also defined focus thematic priorities that address needs and could fill gaps in the existing innovation infrastructure. This led stakeholders to consider it highly relevant to their needs.

Links to Horizon 2020 and other programmes seemed largely theoretical at this stage except in Midi-Pyrénées where one project shows that linkages between the first OGs and Thematic Networks of H2020 can exist¹⁰⁶.

The role of innovation support and networking

In **Brittany**, the MA commissioned an innovation broker for the first call, (funded with regional funding, before the approval of the RDP). This innovation broker, which is a specialised organisation on innovation in agriculture and food sectors in the regions of Brittany and Pays de la Loire, played an important role in setting up the partnerships and projects. The same organisation also plays a role in coordinating the projects. This involvement of innovation support services is seen as a key success factor. In addition, the financing of pre-studies to define the scope and focus of projects has been lauded, as has the joint involvement of two regions. The case study research also found evidence of external coherence aside from efforts by the MA to avoid overlaps with other funding opportunities.

In **Midi-Pyrénées**, innovation brokers act as 'technical coordinators' during the establishment of projects and continue as facilitators during OG operation.

In **Rhône-Alpes**, the implementation of EIP is supported by the establishment of a new partnership for Research, Innovation and Development (AGRI RID). This will gather all regional stakeholders involved in research, education and agricultural development.

Stakeholders did not perceive the EU-level EIP network to have played a large role up to this point in their regions.

Preliminary assessment of EIP's likely effectiveness and efficiency

The projects implemented so far in **Brittany** are considered likely to be effective. Partnerships have been fostered between types of actors that reportedly do not usually work together. The second call

¹⁰⁶ Link between the EIP OG project "Robustagno" and the Sheepnet H2020 Thematic Network.

has opted for smaller projects with themes that are not pre-defined. It is not yet possible to gauge the likely effectiveness of the projects it will fund. EIP is implemented through a flexible approach, it aims at tackling a large regional issue identified by stakeholders since a few years with large projects (first call on protein self-sufficiency), it also aims at supporting smaller projects to address emerging needs from stakeholders (second call).

In Midi-Pyrénées, the EIP allows stakeholders to integrate expertise on a given situation or problematic issue identified with the farmers and other actors who deal with it on a practical basis. The programme's flexibility has been appreciated so far, as has the role assigned to innovation brokers.

In **Rhône-Alpes**, EIP has reinforced partnerships between academic research and local development actors. The coupling of EIP with existing programmes has been considered positive by stakeholders, among other things for adding financial leverage. Moreover, local actors consider the four-year funding window to be very positive, as it enables them to have more financial visibility and develop longer-term projects.

In all three regions, criticism at this stage centred on administrative burdens, which were considered relatively large and not well adapted to innovation projects.

5. Germany

Summary of key findings

This case study covers two German RDPs, namely Berlin-Brandenburg and Rhineland-Palatinate. In Germany, there are 13 Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) established at regional level, with Berlin and Brandenburg, and Lower Saxony and Bremen having joint RDPs. The findings are based on a review of documentation and 10 face-to-face and telephone consultations conducted in May 2016. As of June 2016, Germany was more advanced in its implementation of the EIP than many other Member States. Several MAs have launched calls for proposals, with Berlin-Brandenburg having already launched two, and a number of Operational Groups (OGs) have already been selected.

Relevance and coherence of EIP design

The research conducted found that the EIP was **very relevant** in the context of German agriculture as a tool to complete funding levers that invest in research connected to practice. It indeed complements existing mechanisms of knowledge transfer and cooperation between the scientific community and agriculture (the federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture annually finances up to EUR 36 million a national programme called "Programme to promote innovation" which supports technical and non-technical innovation in Germany in the fields of nutrition, agriculture and consumer protection). It also allows for needed investment at the level of individual farms. The added value of EIP is clearly its bottom-up approach, though it leads to the challenge that all the members of an Operational Group (OG) need to stay motivated to work together until the end of the project. Farmers reportedly have difficulty committing for such long periods.

External coherence appears well-developed at regional level. In both programming areas of Rhineland-Palatinate and Berlin-Brandenburg there are incentives and funding opportunities which support topic-oriented cooperation activities and encourage farmers and businesses to rely on the regional R&D Infrastructure to develop, test and implement practical innovations. In that respect, the EIP measure coherently provides a complementary instrument to these existing tools and fills a gap in terms of innovation supports by promoting stronger links and cooperation between academic research fields and farmers' practical needs.

But the picture is less clear with regard to links between the **EIP and Horizon 2020** and other EU programmes. While the national EIP support unit should play a major role linking partners and themes of OGs to Horizon 2020 and other EU innovation programmes, there is no evidence yet to show this in practice.

The role of innovation support and networking

There are **innovation brokers** in eleven of the twelve German RDPs (i.e. in all but Rhineland-Palatinate) implementing this sub-measure. The provision of such a specific Innovation Support Service dedicated to the EIP implementation is a clear asset for the EIP in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. Indeed, where innovation brokers are provided, they are in charge of the supervision of projects' ideas. They can help potential beneficiaries deal with administrative constraints, increase the quality and innovative dimension of their project, coordinate applications, etc. Despite the early stages of the process, there is evidence that initial support actions that have been taken through the innovation brokers have contributed to preserving the bottom-up approach of OGs proposals while increasing the robustness of their applications. The added-value of innovation brokers is also the coordination of ideas and partners (for instance, OGs with similar ideas are encouraged to form a single group working together towards the innovation).

In terms of **dissemination**, the NRN had put in place an open-access database, while carrying out facilitation and coordinating activities to ensure actors from different OGs knew about each other. Given the level of support that has already been put in place, it seems likely that German OGs are likely to deliver highly innovative projects whose results should be widely disseminated, at least throughout Germany. In Germany, the "Deutsche Vernetzungsstelle Ländliche Räume - DVS" (German

Rural Areas Network Unit) plays a major role of interconnection between the national level and both European networks, the ENRD and the (EU) EIP Network. Despite these networking activities and links ensured through the DVS, the **EU-level EIP network** is seen as too far away from the OGs' needs and interests, at least at the current state of project implementation. Firstly, OGs are still at the beginning of their activities and may share project plans and activities but have as yet no results to share. Besides, farmers and consultants mostly operate only at a regional level and focus, at this stage, on national and regional networking activities to implement their regional projects successfully. Finally, the language barrier may limit practitioners' access to the (EU) EIP network exchanges (especially access to EIP focus groups or seminars/workshops) and reports if the NRN does not sufficiently provide for translation.

Preliminary assessment of EIP's likely effectiveness and efficiency

A '**broad**' approach has been adopted by Rhineland-Palatinate and Brandenburg MAs for selecting themes and projects. In order to ensure a good fit with regional objectives and identified needs, both RDPs contain a list of relatively broad topics that potential OGs shall address.

A 'single-step' call will be implemented in both programming areas meaning that there will not be separate calls for the creation of OGs and subsequent calls for projects. The MA allows OGs to bid for how much money they think is necessary to carry out their projects. In order to have the possibility to support large, expensive project as well as lighter, less expensive ones, no upper limit was set for project funding in Berlin-Brandenburg and Rhineland-Palatinate's RDPs., The research suggested these features would enable a bottom-up approach and potentially lead to successful projects (though it was not possible to gauge effectiveness with any certainty at this stage).

The evidence gathered for the case study suggests that **administrative burden** remains substantial. In order to receive funding, beneficiaries need to produce various forms, make justifications and provide back-up documentation relating to budgetary information. There are also onerous legal requirements for OGs' member organisations. Collectively, these burdens can discourage potential beneficiaries, in particular considering the innovative character of the projects. On the plus side, the provision of information and capacity building supports (meetings, workshops, databases, websites, etc.) both at the national level through the DVS (part of the National Rural Network, Paying Agency) and at regional level (Managing Authorities, innovation support services when they exist) can help potential beneficiaries to deal with these administrative constraints.

6. Greece

Summary of key findings

This case study covers Greece. The findings are based on a review of documentation and 8 face-to-face and telephone consultations conducted in May 2016. As of the end of June 2016, Greece was in the early stages of EIP implementation, with the first call not expected before September 2016. Despite this, it has planned for 435 Operational Groups (OGs), more than any other Rural Development Programme (RDP).

Relevance and coherence of EIP design

In terms of the **relevance of the EIP**, the evidence gathered shows it to be well placed within the context of the Greek rural development sector, addressing strategic needs and priorities, in part due to extensive consultation of external experts during the design phase. These needs relate mainly to major structural deficiencies in the rural economy, such as the low degree of integration of innovation, the lack of formal training in new farming methods (combined with an ageing rural population) and the small average size of farms, which limits their ability to invest in innovation and research and development (R&D). However, progress in implementing the EIP has been slow, as no calls have been launched yet. Interviewees pointed to numerous barriers, such as institutional and administrative constraints and cultural habits that preclude collaboration between sectors. Stakeholders were generally hopeful about the EIP, but raised concerns over the likelihood to identify viable projects and to award the expected number of projects during the funding period. There were also open questions about such issues as how project results would be disseminated and whether and how links would be generated between OGs and Horizon 2020 projects.

In terms of the EIP's **internal coherence**, the two broad themes identified by the Managing Authority (i.e. establishment and operation of OGs of the EIP for productive and sustainable agriculture; and cooperation in environmental projects, environmental practices and actions on climate change) effectively correspond to and are in line with the strategic and operational objectives of the RDP. In terms of **external coherence**, a positive aspect is that OGs are not confined to the EIP but will be eligible to seek additional funding from other EU structural funds (ERDF, Cohesion Fund). These initiatives, which may derive from the National and Regional RIS3 strategies and the Horizon 2020 programme, may contribute to mitigating the risk of limitations in financial capacity to cover key needs identified due to shortage of funds.

The role of innovation support and networking

The **National Rural Network (NRN) will be responsible for the provision of the necessary innovation support services**, but its exact role is yet to be determined. The Support Unit of the National Rural Network (NRN), which is under the auspices of the Managing Authority, is responsible for publicity, facilitating OG formation and disseminating the results of the EIP. For this purpose, an Innovation Sub-network providing technical assistance and also serving as a contact point for interested parties and actors for the set-up and functioning of Operational Groups is being set up within the NRN. The Managing Authority anticipates that potential innovation brokers will emerge from within the Innovation Sub-network of the NRN. Innovation brokers are expected to:

- provide support through actions that may encourage the involvement of interested parties;
- to help identify appropriate partners;
- to support the take-up of bottom-up measures and initiatives; and,
- to assist with the elaboration of action plans for each OG.

There is no provision for the certification of innovation brokers, which raised concern among interviewees about the effectiveness of the brokering function on behalf of certain producers.

Also, the fact that the relevant national institutional framework has not yet been fully established makes a robust assessment difficult at this stage. The decision to delegate the everyday administration of the EIP to the Innovation Sub-network mentioned above while maintaining the supervisory role of the Managing Authority appears a sound choice from both an administrative and practical point of view. However, it is during the actual implementation phase that the system will be tested in terms of its efficiency in both effectively managing the EIP and avoiding an undesirable duplication of functions due to fragmentation. Similarly, the decision to set up a special sub-network dedicated to innovation within the NRN indicates the desire and determination to proactively promote innovation, but important issues such as the composition of the sub-unit and its exact role are yet to be clarified and therefore it is not possible to assess its added value to existing arrangements.

The role of the **EU-level EIP network** appears to be positive and to effectively deal with actual identified needs, especially with the lack of experience of relevant actions in Greece. However, the impact and extent of influence of this measure will be strongly challenged by the technical nature of its outputs and language constraints.

Preliminary assessment of EIP's likely effectiveness and efficiency

The evidence suggests that the **potential effectiveness of EIP** may be influenced by a number of factors, namely: (i) ensuring timely implementation in order to avoid the risk of poorly planned spending with most expenditure occurring near the end of the programming period and the provision of a timely and adequate information flow by the Managing Authority; (ii) involving users during the first stages of OG formation, respecting the principle of user-driven innovation (UDI) and providing OGs with flexibility to implement innovation in increments; and (iii) providing with adequate means and channels to express users' needs and to monitor the fulfilment of these needs, as well as providing sufficient advisory and administrative support to potential beneficiaries. Nevertheless, there is a general concern over the lack of resources resulting from existing financial constraints in Greece. Other important considerations include the effective identification of capable and efficient committees to evaluate applications and monitor the implementation of projects, as well as to ensure that all aspects of the OGs' legal forms are effectively addressed so as to avoid difficulties and increased administrative burden in interactions with the competent Payments Authority.

The relevant **administrative burden** is unknown at present. However, it is widely understood that the provision of guidance in dealing with administrative issues by the NRN and the Managing Authority and the identification of clear structures with a predefined leader in each OG (on the basis of everyone's expertise and professional experience) will be key. At this point, it is noted that OGs will consist of at least two stakeholders (e.g. farmers, researchers, consultants, NGOs, etc.), of which at least one must come from the agricultural or agri-food sector. The OGs shall have a legal status and a specific lead partner for the productivity and sustainability of agriculture. Furthermore, the functioning of OGs shall be governed by an internal operational regulation (cooperation pact).

7. Italy

Summary of key findings

This case study covers three Italian regions, namely Puglia, Emilia-Romagna and Veneto. The findings are based on a review of documentation and 16 face-to-face and telephone consultations conducted in May 2016. Of the regions under review, Emilia-Romagna had launched a call for proposals and was assessing applications at the time of writing. The other two regions had planned calls either for summer 2016 (Veneto) or 2017 (Puglia). Of Italy's 21 regions, only three had already launched calls at this stage.

Relevance and coherence of EIP design

The EIP is **widely acknowledged as relevant**, as the only tool to promote practical innovation in the agricultural sector. By fostering bottom-up innovation, it meets indeed two major challenges in Italy: connecting research areas and infrastructure with practitioners' needs and encouraging a cultural change among farmers through cooperation, innovation and knowledge transfer processes.

In all three programming areas (Puglia, Emilia-Romagna and Veneto), the aims of the EIP-related measures are coherent with the objectives of the Rural Development Programmes. Considering that funding for research has dramatically decreased in Italy, the EIP is seen as an appealing and complementary opportunity for researchers which is reinforced by the attractiveness of the high grant rates foreseen. The EIP measure fills a gap in several regions where the EIP represents the only available instrument MAs have to support innovation at the level of individual farms. The EIP will indeed support some distinctive or singular projects that could not be supported under any other rural development measures nor other innovation supports or programmes.

Some Managing Authorities, like Emilia-Romagna's Managing Authority, have ensured a strong coherence between the EIP and their regional Smart Specialisation Strategy (innovation strategy). Yet, it is at this stage of implementation difficult to assess the extent to which the implementation of the EIP has indeed been coherent with those strategies prior to the first OGs starting to implement their projects. Links to Horizon 2020 had not been extensively explored by Managing Authorities or other stakeholders at this stage, making it difficult to ascertain how likely they would be to bear out in practice.

The role of innovation support and networking

Managing Authorities are interested in participating in **networking activities** in order to obtain feedback and to share experiences regarding the implementation of the EIP. So far, they have widely participated in the most recent EU-level EIP Network Workshop "Operational Groups: First experiences" organised in Italy (Veneto), with the financial support of the Italian National Rural Network (NRN). Yet, beyond this event, the evidence gathered for this case study suggests that there are concerns about the adequacy and pertinence of the EIP network and its activities.

Indeed, workshops organised at the European level are perceived as inappropriate to provide sufficient practical information from the EU-level to national and regional levels. Similarly, as regards EU level Focus Groups, beyond the linguistic barrier (they are facilitated in English), their format is not seen as attractive enough to local and private actors (farmers/ foresters) that might be part of Operational Groups.

The NRN is expected to play a key role in supporting innovation and facilitating networking activities. For instance, the NRN is expected to provide capacity building support to Managing Authorities in the implementation of the EIP (for example, it will help MAs draft the calls and clarify the rules and procedure for OGs). Also, an informal network involving several Italian Managing Authorities exists and may be a channel to exchange information and good practices related to the EIP measure.

Information and technical support has been directly provided by some Managing Authorities to potential Operational Groups. However, since there are no Operational Groups (OGs) in Italy at this stage of implementation, there has **not been any networking event** dedicated to OGs as such.

Preliminary assessment of EIP's likely effectiveness and efficiency

Effectiveness is difficult to gauge due to the early stage of implementation. There are two major set-up approaches of the EIP adopted by the different Managing Authorities: the "global amount" approach and the "package of measures". Under the global amount approach, the OG funding is implemented through a single measure, using one application. The other approach is called 'package of measures. This entails applying for funding under various applicable measures including Measure 16.1 but also others, in order to set up and operate an OG.

The administrative burden related to the application process is perceived by stakeholders as a key obstacle to the EIP. OGs have to submit very detailed documents, including working and financial plans and different cost estimates for each item of expenditure. These administrative requirements are perceived to be very time consuming and sometimes complicated for applicants. This administrative burden also affects Managing Authorities (review of all the requested documents, answer to administrative questions) and regional Paying Agencies (audit and control).

8. Poland

Summary of key findings

This case study covers the whole of Poland. The findings are based on a review of relevant documentation and six face-to-face and telephone consultations conducted in May 2016. At the time of writing, implementation of the EIP in Poland was still in its early stages. The creation and functioning of Operational Groups (OGs) will be guided by legislation that is currently in consultation and will not be in force until autumn 2016. As of June 2016, the consultation process has not yet finished. First calls for OGs are expected in November 2016. The total public expenditure for M16 in the Rural Development Programme (RDP) budget is EUR 57,998,187.00, which constitutes only 0.4% of the total RDP expenditure in Poland (€13.5 billion).

Relevance and coherence of EIP design

The EIP is **very relevant** in the context of Polish agriculture. The mechanisms of knowledge transfer and cooperation between the scientific community and agriculture are currently poorly developed. The groups of stakeholders tend to work in sector silos: needs of the farmers are judged as not being communicated effectively to the scientific community and the scientific community often does not develop solutions which can be implemented in practice. What is more, the Measure will fill the gap created by other Operational Programmes in Poland: because whilst there are other programmes which fund the development of innovation, the RDP is the only one which funds implementation of innovation.

Poland's approach to the EIP is characterised by an **open approach**, with no themes defined by the Managing Authorities. The MA also allows OGs to bid for how much money they think is necessary to carry out their projects (up to the maximum €2,730,000.00). A 'single-call approach' means that there will not be separate calls for the creation of OGs and subsequent calls for projects. The OGs need to be created beforehand, at the expense of the members and only then bid for a project. Only if successful, the costs of creating the OG can be included in the project budget and refunded (unsuccessful bids for OGs don't get their development costs refunded). This might be discouraging for smaller entities with limited resources.

In combination with the fact that the (draft) legislation guiding the EIP in Poland does not foresee a requirement to include farmers, these features raised **concerns about the likelihood of a bottom-up approach** to the EIP. Rather, some stakeholders felt it would be dominated by large business.

The role of innovation support and networking

While difficult to judge prior to the establishment of any OGs, the **support system** offered by the *Sieć na rzecz Innowacji w Rolnictwie i na obszarach wiejskich (SIR)* (Agricultural and Rural Innovation Network) and the *Centrum Doradztwa Rolniczego (CDR)* (National Centre for Rural Advisory) seems to be quite robust as it builds on an existing and well developed regional and national advisory and support service. Despite the early stages of the process, there is evidence that initial support actions have been taken, including the organisation of a series of explanatory meetings for potential participants of Operational Groups during 2014 and 2015. The Network also maintains a database of potential OG partners, with over 200 organisations registered to date. What is more, one of the Regional Centres for Rural Advisory is currently implementing a project that aims at preparing 200 advisors, R&D sector workers, farmers, entrepreneurs and representatives of NGOs for the EIP.

Following the model of the EIP, the Agricultural and Rural Innovation Network is reportedly working towards creating a shared 'virtual office' with the Regional Centres. This virtual office would allow disseminating information about OGs and potential partners seeking to form OGs across Poland, and potentially even attract foreign partners.

Preliminary assessment of EIP's likely effectiveness and efficiency

Addressing the pressing need for more innovation in Polish agriculture is **coherent** with the Polish "Strategy for sustainable development of agriculture, rural areas and fisheries"¹⁰⁷, and the "Strategy for Innovation and Effectiveness of Economy"¹⁰⁸. The RDP also expects Measure 16 to contribute to the main objective of Europe 2020 strategy, namely creating an economy with high employment levels, ensuring territorial and social cohesion. But such contributions, along with synergies with Horizon 2020, have not been clearly articulated and are hard to gauge at this stage.

¹⁰⁷ Strategia zrównoważonego rozwoju wsi, rolnictwa i rybactwa", <http://www.minrol.gov.pl/Informacje-branzowe/Strategia-zrownowazonego-rozwoju-wsi-rolnictwa-i-rybactwa-na-lata-2012-2020/Dokumenty-analizy>

¹⁰⁸ Strategia innowacyjności i efektywności gospodarki", <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/Download?id=WMP20130000073&type=2>.

9. Spain

Summary of key findings

This case study covers three Spanish regions, namely the Basque Country, Catalonia and Andalusia. The findings are based on a review of documentation and 25 face-to-face and telephone consultations conducted in April and May 2016. The first calls were launched in late 2015 in the Basque Country and Catalonia and the second calls were launched in May and June 2016 in these two regions. The Andalusian Managing Authority will launch the first call in summer 2016.

Relevance and coherence of EIP design

In all three regions the measure has been **designed with flexibility**, in particular with regard to defining the themes for the OGs (Operational Groups) to address. This point is strongly appreciated by current and potential members of OGs, and has helped them feel the initiative would meet real needs and adhere to the desired bottom-up approach. The two-stage approach to funding OGs (i.e. first set up, then operation) was also considered conducive to this in Catalonia and Andalusia; the Basque Country, on the other hand, has a one-stage approach. Managing Authorities erroneously thought they had to define 'innovation', which has presented a challenge, for which Andalusia drew on external expertise.

The extent of **internal coherence** of the EIP with wider innovation support given to farmers is shown across the three regions. All stakeholders interviewed were **highly satisfied and enthusiastic** of the EIP in their regions. The strong links and closeness to the territory where the EIP is implemented and the key role of farmers/producers in innovation projects were perceived as the EIP's main points of added-value in the three regions visited. In the Basque Country and in Catalonia, the limited duration of the projects (two to three years) is perceived as a way to guarantee a dynamic and effective innovation cycle.

Certain issues are still in discussion and will probably lead to some adjustments for the next calls. These include: the assessment criteria of the projects in the Basque Country and Catalonia, the maximum grant for each OG in Catalonia, the duration of the projects in Catalonia and Andalusia (where the duration will be probably extended).

Regarding **external coherence**, the EIP and other public funding like H2020 are perceived to fit with **two different frameworks**: the added-value of the EIP is perceived to be the close links with production and the flexibility of the topics that can be covered, whereas H2020 projects are considered to be broader and not designed for SMEs and/or farmers. At regional level, the external coherence of the EIP is perceived in the fact that this new tool is an answer to the wide gap between research and farmers' needs.

The role of innovation support and networking

Almost all stakeholders interviewed pointed out that their experience so far was insufficient to be able to assess the **EIP network at European level**. At the EU level, stakeholders value the knowledge transfer and sharing of experiences.

For the time being, stakeholders are mainly focused on the implementation of the measure in their regions with a view to develop strong local networks in the agricultural and agri-food innovation sectors. Nevertheless, internal regional networks and the NRN might be effective for the dissemination of results and knowledge transfer. Opportunities for cross-border projects are expected to be launched by the national RDP (Rural Development Program), though the first call is yet to be launched.

Preliminary assessment of EIP's likely effectiveness and efficiency

The likely effectiveness of the EIP is mixed across the three regions. On the one hand, the general approach of the OGs appears to be attractive to (potential) applicants, including farmers, foresters, researchers and private sector stakeholders. In the three regions, a culture of innovation exists and innovation brokers have already been identified. The flexibility of the measure regarding

the topics and the composition of OGs is one of its key selling points. The first calls received a strong interest and the measure as a whole is expected to be highly successful.

On the other hand, **shortcomings** in the way the EIP is being implemented related in part to practical concerns. For example, **late payments** could be a significant issue for small companies and **may discourage** potential OGs' members to participate in a project. This point has been highlighted in all three regions. In addition, needs for **investment in equipment** are not included in the eligible costs, **except in Andalusia** where the depreciation of equipment over the project duration is eligible for being funded. Finally, as for any innovative projects, the expected results are hard to define precisely even if relevant lists of indicators to measure the success of projects have been developed as part of the selection criteria.

The **administrative burden** is also considered heavy for both Managing Authorities and for applicants and could be a limiting factor for small companies. However, it is not considered to be heavier than for other similarly available public funds.

10. Sweden

Summary of key findings

This case study covers the whole of Sweden. The findings are based on a review of documentation and ten face-to-face, five telephone consultations during May 2016 as well as on-going correspondence with the MA. At the time of the fieldwork, Sweden was in the process of appraising the first round of OG and project applications.

Relevance and coherence of EIP design

Sweden is an example of a country where there is a **clear demand for the EIP**, where it can potentially complement other initiatives and satisfy demonstrable needs. While there is an increased emphasis on innovation in agriculture in recent years, there are few opportunities for funding practical, problem-driven projects.

The **design of the EIP** provides a structure for increasing the connections between farmers, entrepreneurs, advisors and researchers. The **EIP focuses squarely on rural areas and funding interactive, needs-based projects** with venture-capital qualities. This is meant to provide for a bottom-up approach that encourages farmers to participate to a greater extent than with other public funding opportunities. Especially the role of assuming risk in innovation projects with uncertain outcomes was appreciated by interviewed stakeholders. It is also encouraging that there appears to be a high degree of support for the design of the measure from farmers interviewed, and the approach adopted for implementation allows a great deal of scope for farmers to identify and develop the innovation actions that they wish to pursue.

In theory, there is **strong coherence between the Horizon 2020 strategy and EIP**. The new Horizon 2020 work programme emphasises interaction of multi-actor research projects with EIP through involvement of OGs as well as dissemination of easily understandable "practice abstracts" to the EIP database. On a practical level, there are however uncertainties about how the connection between Horizon 2020 and regional programming such as the EIP, will function.

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) also has theoretical linkages with the EIP (i.e. works towards similar goals such as innovation and technology development); many of the priorities of Swedish regions lend themselves to synergy effects. For example, the eight regional programmes of the ERDF in Sweden all contain innovation as a key priority (the same goes for the Interreg programmes and the National Regional Fund). Presently the EIP implementation is not linked with ERDF or wider innovation programmes though there appears to be potential synergies in terms of aims and priorities. Moreover, it would be difficult for the EIP to align in practical terms with other programmes so early into its implementation. Cooperation is also complicated through multi-level governance structures which would require collaboration mechanisms between EIP and regional funding authorities. Steps have however been taken by the MA to investigate how the EIP could complement the ERDF instruments in particular. Pooling funding streams are envisaged to become more important in the future, once the EIP has gained traction and established itself in the innovation ecosystem.

The role of innovation support and networking

The NRN hosts a national EIP Innovation Network which also includes an Innovation Support Team who provide advice and innovation expertise. The NRN role includes raising awareness about the EIP programme, act as innovation broker, disseminate findings of OGs and promote the formation of OGs. In terms of reaching target groups, most farmers interviewed for the case study already had experience of innovation which indicates that the most obvious stakeholder have been reached. Furthermore, several EIP information events and other dissemination activities have been undertaken by the NRN. It is more challenging to gauge to what extent mainstream farmers (e.g. without a background in innovation) are aware and use the NRN and the tools supplied.

Concrete **national plans for dissemination and follow-up** were as of yet not fully developed, however given the stage of implementation there still remains time for this to occur. Sharing and disseminating outcomes broadly will be critical in '*successfully putting the ideas into practice*' as the EIP definition of innovation states, in which the NRN will play an important role. Future evidence of knowledge exchange and dissemination activities will be an important indicator to understand the success of the 'translation' of EIP generated output.

In terms of cross-border collaborations, many applicants do not have a tradition of this type transnational co-operation and most stakeholders agreed that it appears unlikely that this would happen initially. Though innovation projects under the guise of the EIP primarily are applied within the boundaries of programme regions, the incentives for cross-border operational groups might need better articulation if they are to occur.

Preliminary assessment of EIP's likely effectiveness and efficiency

So far over a hundred OG applications have been received which indicates high interest. The right groundwork appears to be in place, the full-funding model allows Operational Groups (OGs) for a degree of risk taking (inherent in any innovation project), helping farmers and other actors to test and apply their ideas. The decision not to restrict applications to specific thematic areas should ensure applications are encouraged in a wide variety of topic areas. An Advisory Selection Committee, with members drawn from a variety of disciplines, should provide the MA with the expertise needed to assess project applications robustly. Given the open nature of the selection criteria and composition requirements for OGs, a couple of interviewees expressed concerns that the Advisory Selection Committee, made up of seven individuals, could be stretched when it comes to distinguishing between applications on subjects where the committee itself might lack expertise. The Advisory Selection Committee is however free to get expert opinion on subjects they lack expertise in.

The extent to which the implementation decisions are **bearing out in practice is only beginning to become evident** due to the early stage of the measure. Stakeholders have expressed their confidence in the EIP as a concept and appreciate the expertise and assistance provided by the MA and the Innovation Support Team (hosted by the NRN). The few OG applicants consulted during the case study indicated that even if projects are not farmer-led, projects will provide them (i.e. farmers) with a significant role. Besides farmers many relevant agricultural innovation actors have also applied to the EIP. Though not a requirement, there is so far in the implementation of the EIP little evidence of cross-sector involvement of actors outside the agricultural sector. The initial implementation of the EIP is also a learning opportunity for the MA (especially with regard to the first round of OG applications) that is likely to lead to improvements in the functioning and delivery of the measure over time.

Finally, a main concern voiced by stakeholders is with regards to the **administrative burden**. Simple procedures will be important for ensuring involvement of stakeholders. In this sense, the EIP runs a real risk of being seen as a 'difficult' funding instrument discouraging potential beneficiaries.

11. United Kingdom

Summary of key findings

This case study covers three of the four countries of the UK (England, Scotland and Wales). The findings are based on a review of documentation and 24 face-to-face and telephone consultations during May 2016. At the time of the fieldwork, four OGs were already operational in Scotland; England was in the process of appraising the first round of OG applications; and Wales was planning to open its first window for OG proposals in July 2016.

Relevance and coherence of EIP design

The evidence gathered for this case study suggests that EIP is likely to reflect the **most pressing needs of farmers/foresters** in each country. The measure is also seen as **attractive to target audiences**, especially if it turns out to be **genuinely farmer led**. This is being encouraged by most or all of the following factors (depending on the country in question): relatively low budget for OGs, which is accessible for farmers; thematic flexibility; the ability for non-farming bodies to lead OGs; and the absence of any requirement for OGs to become legal entities.

The extent of **internal coherence of EIP** with wider farming and innovative support is mixed across the three countries. Coherence is particularly strong in Wales, but in Scotland and England, the wider support available to aid the delivery of EIP is much more limited, raising concerns about EIP's reach to more mainstream farmers. Across all three countries, there appears to be **weak external coherence** to wider (non-farming specific) innovation programmes in the UK and EU, including H2020.

The role of innovation support and networking

The **nature of NRN roles** varies across the three countries, but includes raising awareness of the EIP measure and calls for applications and disseminating the findings of OGs. Also, in England and Scotland, they will be informal innovation brokers. However, there are some concerns with the reach of NRNs (in Scotland and England) and their capacity / resources (in Wales) to fully engage with EIP. Across the UK, the NRNs are creating an **informal national EIP network**, which will facilitate the sharing of EIP experiences and lessons, documentation and guidance, and will provide an opportunity to explore cross-(UK)-border working.

The pan-European approach of EIP, and the ability to share lessons across Europe, is seen as a distinctive and potentially "very powerful" aspect of the measure. The EIP network is seen as critical to that, and interviewees believe it is set up in an appropriate way to facilitate cross-EU learning (although it is still early days). However, there are some **concerns about the lack of guidance for cross-border OGs**, which is deterring Managing Authorities from promoting cross-border OGs.

Preliminary assessment of EIP's likely effectiveness and efficiency

The **administrative requirements** of the OG application process in England and Scotland have been relatively burdensome, in part due to the use of application forms that are inappropriate for this kind of innovation measure, and a lack of clear guidance from MAs on the requirements. The burden associated with the monitoring and evaluation of EIP is not yet clear, as all three countries are still developing their plans.

The evidence suggests that the **potential effectiveness of EIP** is somewhat mixed across the three countries. Wales' EIP appears to have the right foundations in place to be successful – including a strong farm advisory and innovation support network to wrap around EIP which is already well-established, provision for innovation brokers to facilitate access, an existing culture of innovation across the sector, strong networks and mechanisms to reach 'mainstream' farmers, and some strategies in place to ensure that

EIP lessons are implemented. It is more difficult to judge the potential success of EIP in Scotland and England. They have both observed high volumes of interest in their measures, suggesting strong demand for support. However, there still appears to be a lack of visibility of EIP in Scotland, and some confusion around what EIP is seeking to do. Neither country is introducing formal innovation broker support, nor is the wider support landscape limited in both countries.

It is still early days for the EIP measures in the UK. Each country is learning as they go, including through the first round of OG applications, and have the in-built flexibility to adjust their measures as needed. There are, however, early indications that suggest **the following factors are conducive to effective EIP implementation** (at least in the specific context of the UK): stakeholder involvement, provision of support, using small project budgets to engender farmer-led OGs, targeting of innovative farmers, use of two-step application processes (including expressions of interest), multi-part dissemination channels, the use of events, and clear rules and guidance for applicants.

