



SOLINSA

Support of Learning and Innovation
Networks for Sustainable Agriculture

Agricultural Knowledge Systems In Transition:
Towards a more effective and efficient support of Learning
and Innovation Networks for Sustainable Agriculture

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THE “SOLINSA APPROACH” TO SUPPORT LINSA

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INNOVATION BROKERS TRAINING COURSE

21-24 OCTOBER 2013

Project Number: 266306
FP7 – KBBE – 2010 –4



Funded by the
European Union



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Project funded under the Seventh Research Framework Programme of the European Union		
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The objective of this document is to provide a first exploratory approach on “how to support LINSAs?”. This approach will be tested and improved during the SOLINSA training course in October 2013. This paper is a first draft, and will be consolidated after the training course, in order to enrich it with the discussions between SOLINSA research team and the participants.

The authors thank all researchers of the SOLINSA project for their active contribution to this paper, which is the result of this intense 3-years research project.

1 WHAT IS SOLINSA ABOUT?

SOLINSA is a European research project, funded by the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Commission. It involves 11 research partner organisations from Switzerland, Italy, The Netherlands, Latvia, France, Germany, Hungary and the UK. The project coordinator is Heidrun Moschitz at FIBL in Switzerland.

In this project, we have worked with 17 Learning and Innovative Networks for Sustainable Agriculture (LINSAs). The objective was to learn about the process of innovation; the nature and the role of the networks in agriculture; to identify the information that the people need to get involved in sustainable agriculture; and to test participatory methods to support these networks and innovation processes.

A key objective of this project is to understand how LINSAs develop and operate in practice. Specifically it aims to identify barriers to their development and explore how the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation system (AKIS)¹, formed by policy instruments, financial arrangements, research, education and advisory services might effectively support them in a cost-efficient and effective way.

Our definition of sustainable agriculture is concerned with the need for agricultural practices and related on- and off-farm activities to be economically viable, to engage for the social welfare, to meet human needs for food, and to care about animal and natural resources. Rather than considering the narrow definition of multifunctional sustainable agriculture, our approach is based on a contextualisation of the agricultural sector, integrated in complex rural dynamics² and considering wide interactions between agriculture and its natural, social and economic milieu.

¹ For a complete literature review on AKIS, see : Desjeux Y, Faure G, Gasselin P., Rebufel P, 2009. Synthèse bibliographique sur le conseil en agriculture. UMR Innovation, Montpellier, France.

² Renting, H., Oostindie, H., Laurent, C., Brunori, G., Barjolle, D., Jervell, A.M., Granberg, L. and Heinonen, M. (2008) ‘Multifunctionality of agricultural activities, changing rural identities and new institutional arrangements’, *Int. J. Agricultural, Resources, Governance and Ecology*, Vol. 7, No. 4, pp.361–385.

The level of innovation developed in a LINSAs can be analysed through the transition school as defined by Geels 2004³, which describe innovation in link to its level of structuration (see figure 1 below). At a lowest level of structuration, **novelties**, framing is distant from already existing frames, actors experiment new patterns of interaction and new ways to do things, and the outcomes are uncertain. At a higher level of structuration, **niches**, there is an adequate level of coordination within a given network, but the mode of operation can survive only because its size is limited and it does not challenge a broader set of rules. This set of rules, the **regime**, provides a general frame for coordination of activities within a system. In a given macro context, called **landscape**, the regime provides stability.

When regime is solid, innovation is mainly of incremental type. Radical innovation occurs into novelty that turns into niches, but they are not strong enough to challenge the regime. The regime can become weaker for internal contradictions, for the pressure of niches that provide alternatives, or as an effect of landscape change.

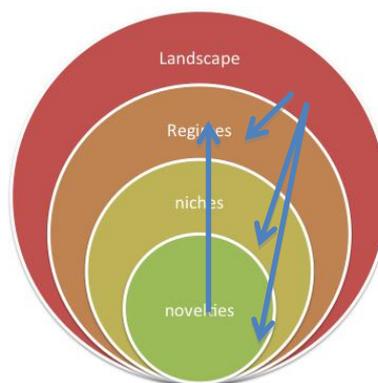


Figure 1 - A multilevel model of innovation

³ Geels, F. W. (2004). From sectoral systems of innovation to socio-technical systems: Insights about dynamics and change from sociology and institutional theory. *Research Policy*, 33(6-7), 897-920.

2 WHAT IS A LINSNA?

LINSNA⁴, *Learning and Innovation Networks for Sustainable Agriculture*, are defined in our project as networks of producers, consumers, experts, NGOs, SMEs, local administrations and components of the formal AKIS⁵, that are mutually engaged with common goals for sustainable agriculture and rural development - cooperating, sharing resources and co-producing new knowledge by creating conditions for communication.

These networks operate on the principle of sharing knowledge and learning. They benefit from the mode-2⁶ learning process, which implies exchange and feedback loops between research, extension and practices, rather than the 'transfer of knowledge', as in the case of the conventional AKIS.

From the SOLINSNA project a wide diversity of LINSNA emerge: from local scale to national or transnational, from small, simple homogenous networks to large, complex and diverse networks with multiple actors, and from top-down to bottom-up in origin.

Some LINSNA emerge outside the mainstream AKIS and voluntarily remain outside, whereas others, with the same initial situation choose to develop strong links with the AKIS. Other LINSNA are built by AKIS players in order to foster a more sustainable agriculture, and benefit of support from brokers from the AKIS organisations. Some LINSNA grow, but remain autonomous, some others expand or multiply in a network of similar, or linked networks.

⁴ The concept of LINSNA was firstly described in Eurochoices (2013) by the researchers working in the SOLINSNA research project: Brunori G., Barjolle D., Dockes A.-C., Helmle S., Ingram J., Klerkx L., Moschitz H., Nemes G., and Tisenkopfs T. (2013) "CAP Reform and Innovation: The Role of Learning and Innovation Networks." EuroChoices. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1746-692X.12025/abstract>.

⁵ Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) is a term used to define a set of public and private organisations dedicated to research, education and extension, and their interaction with knowledge users, traditionally farmers.

⁶ Mode-2 learning is a concept developed by Argyris since the mid-70s. See for ex. Argyris, Putnam and Mc Lain Smith, 1985. Action science: concepts, methods and skills for intervention. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

An example of growing links to the AKS: Network for a Sustainable Agriculture, France (RAD)

The RAD is a network of farmers groups, created and developed outside the AKS in 1980s as an alternative way of farming which stresses sustainable farming (ecological, social and economical). It emerged in opposition to the top-down and conventional approaches of the traditional AKS. From late 1990s onwards recognition grew and the RAD took part in state funded research-development projects. Although now connections to the AKS do exist, the network still claims its independency. However RAD faces financial issues due to uncertainty, irregularity and gets little support from the AKS. The RAD is now facing a dilemma concerning strategic decisions: whether it gets more connected to the AKS, how it continues its development, whether it takes part or not in more projects. Slowly ideas defended by the RAD are becoming more important in the traditional AKS and the network is becoming more recognised for its work but this has not brought any financial support.

An example of informal links with AKIS: Naturama (Hungary)

Naturama is 11 a network of LEADER groups developed from an action research project concerned with knowledge innovation and co-creation for the purposes of rural and community development for knowledge co-creation. All its member associations are financed by AKS and are integrated in it as institutions. While Naturama as a network is completely informal on purpose, since members look for things there that the AKS do not provide them with.

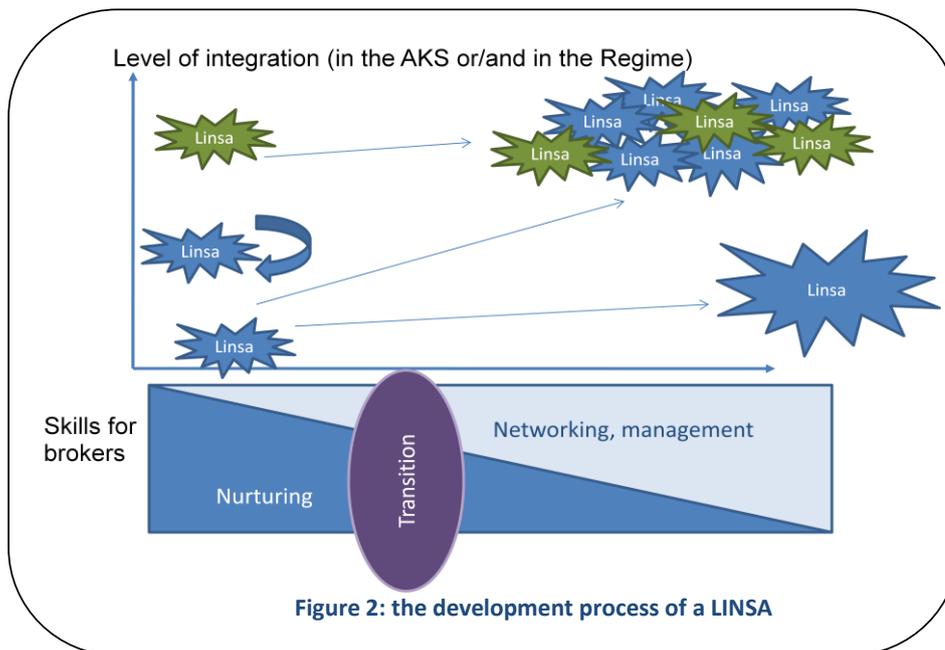
3 THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF LINSAs - THEIR SUPPORTING NEEDS

Based on the observation and analysis of 17 different networks across the 8 different countries participating in the SOLINSA project, it was possible to systematically identify the evolution process of the LINSAs over time. Indeed, the innovative networks may emerge responding to any kind of pressure for change, or development needs. After emerging and according to their specific dynamics, social context, market position or learning process, the LINSAs follow different trajectories. For the purpose of designing adequate support system, the understanding of their evolution is crucial. It allows defining proper support modalities and tools.

Figure 2 below shows the different identified paths and ways in which the studied LINSAs have developed and evolved over time. Some key characteristics have been identified as essential for defining their needs for support: their level of integration, both in the regime (between the “niche” and the “regime”, as defined by and in the AKIS (i.e. the formal knowledge system, which is formed by the entirely or partly public institutions).

The following trajectories of integration have been mostly identified:

- The LINSAs do not grow; they remain outside the AKIS and at a niche level over time.
- The LINSAs grow, but without turning into the “regime” and without developing any link with the formal institutions of the AKIS.
- After emerging as a novelty or niche, the LINSAs spread off progressively, and interact with mutual exchanges with the regime and the AKIS. Evolving so, the LINSAs may contribute to a paradigm shift in its broad social and technical social landscape.
- The LINSAs may disappear into a regime, merging with other well-established networks or even formal institutions in the AKIS, after providing a strong contribution to the long-term transformation of the regime.
- Finally, the LINSAs may disappear sooner or later after their creation, having impact neither on the regime nor on the AKIS: the innovation was not useful and died.



The SOLINSA-researchers have interacted in a participatory manner with the LINSAs. Along these relationships, the role of the researcher was to analyse and identify, and then provide, support for the LINSAs to its evolutionary dynamic. It was possible to identify and characterise in a systemic manner the needs of the LINSAs in terms of support.

According to their level of integration over time, the LINSAs express different kinds of **needs of support**. **According to these needs, the persons who want to develop a supportive relationship with a LINSAs needs different and specific skills.**

At every stage, organisational, **management, and group dynamic issues** are crucial. Therefore, facilitation and organisation skills are needed for the supportive people. Nevertheless, some skills appear being more adequate to specific stages.

In the early stages of LINSAs development, the LINSAs is in a nurturing or nursing stage. The main needs can be qualified as “nurturing needs” (help people to identify their objectives, to work together, in a very supportive way), hence the necessity of high social skills for the supportive persons.

After this first step of self-development and nurturing, LINSAs enter in a mature stage of development. The needs are oriented to other support like: networking with other LINSAs and with the formal AKIS, change in governance, strategic reflection, marketing and funding. Corresponding skills for the supportive persons are more in project management, technical and economic expertise, facilitation, organisational development, and change management.

The transition period between the nurturing stage and the mature stage of development can be specifically fragile and has to be anticipated and followed. Note that not every LINSAs pass through this transition stage.

The interactions between external supportive person and the actors of the LINSAs may develop over time, and even rarely starts at the early stages of a LINSAs. They actually might begin at any point, even in a mature LINSAs.

The needs of the LINSAs are difficult to identify and qualify, for several reasons. The first is the nature of the network and its relatively weak governance: the supportive person may have several discussion partners, and the “LINSAs” as entity as such is not always a unique decision-maker, who would have clearly defined a need, or even a vision. This raises the necessity of a sufficient “observatory” period for the supportive person, in order for her to clarify the main issues, stakes, challenges and functioning of the network. In fact, there is a strong first and preliminary need for adaptation and flexibility from the side of the supportive person, because the innovation process and the network itself are evolving constantly. This moving and adaptive behaviour will help the process of adjustment between the LINSAs and the supportive person. After an adaptation period, and according to the context and the ability of the LINSAs to enter a constructive and much as possible unified dialog with the supportive person, the position of the supportive person, and the support service themselves, may be defined.

An example of needs for organisational improvement: G7 in Hungary

G7 is an informal, voluntary partnership, a Network of Practice, uniting local actors committed to establish a more sustainable and healthy local food system in Gödöllő, a major city of the Budapest agglomeration. The local government of Gödöllő invited G7 to co-operate in planning a new, sustainable local food strategy. This is therefore a critical point of the organisation’s development. To perform this task successfully not only organisational structure and communication, but also learning, knowledge transfer, and creation of knowledge need considerable improvement within the organisation. Organisational development (learning) is a priority in the following areas: Stabilize internal management, procedures, communication, and decision-making process; Co-operate effectively both with other NGOs, and the local government, and improve communication, negotiation strategy, local social and political embeddedness, etc. Although professional, members of G7 need to improve in management as well as in social, mediation, facilitation, co-operation and communication skills that are so vital to run volunteer organisations.

What are the supports' needs expressed by the LINSAs?

According to the interviews and workshops conducted within the SOLINSA project, "funding" is the most claimed need, by every LINSAs, at every stage, but in this paper we will focus more on the knowledge needs. Indeed, the objective of this paper is to help the supportive persons to LINSAs to achieve their activity.

"Classical" knowledge needs are usually provided by advisers or existing actors, acting as specialists, generalists, facilitators and brokers.

The scope of the knowledge, which is addressed by the classical knowledge needs, consist in:

- Technical and scientific skills.
- Economic and marketing knowledge and skills.
- Management skills.
- Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) competencies.
- Administrative skills.

"Emerging" knowledge needs require other and very specific skills. To address this demand, a new cadre of professionals and new skills for the present advisers are necessary. The scope of the knowledge, which is concerned with these emerging needs, consists in:

- Brokering information, networks and resources (funds, techniques, human resources).
- Managing relationships among the actors in the LINSAs, and with external stakeholders like policy makers, NGOs, consumers, etc. (network coordination).
- Improving organisational structures, i.e. enhancing ability to facilitate, organise, coordinate and administer the networks (organisational development).

An example of LINSAs build around knowledge building: Study clubs: Sustainable Dairy Farming, Netherlands.

The project in the province of Drenthe has had a strong focus on learning. The core of the working method is the study club approach in which farmers come together with a facilitator and discuss different aspects of low external input farming. Within the study club the farmers have the freedom to discuss various topics, although they are guided by facilitators, consultants, and experts. Since 2009 the project was divided into two main groups: an experimental group of experienced farmers who were long-time participants in the network. These groups were tasked with trying to take the low external input farming to its limits and try to find the breaking points of the system. This was a form of learning-by-doing and using the farmers as a 'field laboratory'. The other groups were composed of 'new' farmers who were introduced into the low external input farming production style. In these last groups there may have been some more emphasis on transfer of some forms of codified knowledge

How can a LINSAs be supported?

Finally, the main problems faced by the LINSAs lead to a range of key support services. They are the following:

- Enhancing recognition and acceptance from policy makers and AKIS (this helps to enhance the level of integration and therefore, the access to established forms of funding and support).
- Building capacities.
- Supporting networking.
- Cooperation.
- Training.
- Accessing to funds, i.e. targeted action research or research development projects funds.
- Action research and research.

Of course, this list is not exhaustive, as the needs of the LINSAs may be as well related to conflict management, governance, technical aspects, logistical aspects, information and communication techniques, etc. Actually, this list focuses on the core “soft” skills, which are more important than traditional “hard” skills, because in the emerging phase of the network, the most dynamic relates to the ability to network and consolidate the functioning and coordination between the actors.

4 THE ROLE AND POSITION OF THE SUPPORT, AND ESPECIALLY OF THE INNOVATION BROKERS

LINSA have a great potential to drive the farmers and more generally, the rural communities, all around Europe, towards sustainable agriculture and development. To boost the growth of the innovation through the active networks, there is a will to support them in an appropriate manner. The special needs of the innovation support ask for competencies, which have been carefully identified and described as “innovation brokering”. This term relies to “*persons or organizations that, from a relatively impartial third-party position, purposefully catalyze innovation through bringing together actors and facilitating their interaction. Innovation brokering expands the role of agricultural extension from that of a one-to-one intermediary between research and farmers to that of an intermediary that creates and facilitates many-to-many relationships. As an organization and function, innovation brokering differs from traditional extension and R&D because it represents the institutionalization of the facilitation role, with a broad systemic, multi-actor, innovation systems perspective.*” (Klerkx et al 2009)⁷.

The innovation brokers (I-brokers) can help LINSA to define their objectives, to innovate, to find support from different sources, to build their governance structure and operation. They can belong to organisations from inside or outside the main AKS or they can be independent consultants.

In fact, SOLINSA have highlighted the importance of the innovation brokering in the context of innovation support to networks that move towards sustainability. At the same time, SOLINSA researchers clearly stressed the fact that the LINSAs need flexibility in the supporting activities. Innovation brokering is not the only support that the LINSAs express. This is a very specific need. But, when intervening aside a LINSA, any supporting person should first clearly identify the best role and position he/she could take. Not every time the innovation brokering comes first. A position of facilitator, “traditional” advisor, expert, technical support or researcher can be more appropriate. A change of role and position may occur over time. Moreover, the intervention of several persons may be the best to really bring something tangible and valuable to the LINSA.

The context of the new **European Innovation Partnership (EIP)** for agriculture gives importance to the I-brokers. As described on the Commission website⁸, *the EIP for agriculture adheres to the “interactive innovation model” which focuses on forming partnerships - using bottom-up approaches and is linking farmers, advisors, researchers, businesses, and other actors in Operational*

⁷ Klerkx, L., Hall, A., & Leeuwis, C. (2009). Strengthening agricultural innovation capacity: Are innovation brokers the answer? *International Journal of Agricultural Resources, Governance and Ecology*, 8, 409–438.

⁸ For more information on EIP in Agriculture and Operational groups see: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eip/documents/eip-opportunities_en.htm

Groups (OP). Innovation broker is a connector between the managing authorities and possible partners of the OP. Raising awareness and animating the participation in innovative actions are keys for the successful implementation of the EIP. Single actors may have difficulties in finding partners and starting an Operational Group project. An "innovation broker" is a person or organisation that could help this process by acting as a go-between, discovering innovative ideas, connecting partners, finding funding sources and preparing project proposals. Ideally, 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. According to the definition given, "their main task is to help to 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."

Innovation brokering increases the chances of a project or an Operational Group for passing the selection processes in the EIP framework. More generally, SOLINSA research project found that I-brokers help the LINSAs developing according to the objectives and vision of the LINSA members.

Concerning the competencies of I-brokers, they should have good connections to the agricultural sector, a profound understanding of agriculture and good communication and facilitation skills.

5 STEPWISE APPROACH TO SUPPORT A LINSA

We suggest structuring the supporting activities of the supportive persons, in their role of “I-brokers” or more largely of “LINSAs supporters” in four steps (see figure 3 below). These steps are independent from the level of integration of the LINSAs. Although, the content of the supporting activities should be adapted to each stage.

The 4 steps are the following:

- First step: identification of LINSAs, establishing trust between Innovation broker and LINSAs, and understanding its characteristics.
- Second step: joint analysis of needs, negotiation of collaboration, and formalising of the objective of the supporting activities.
- Third step: carrying out the supporting activities.
- Fourth step: evaluation of the activities, and possible definition of a new set of objectives.

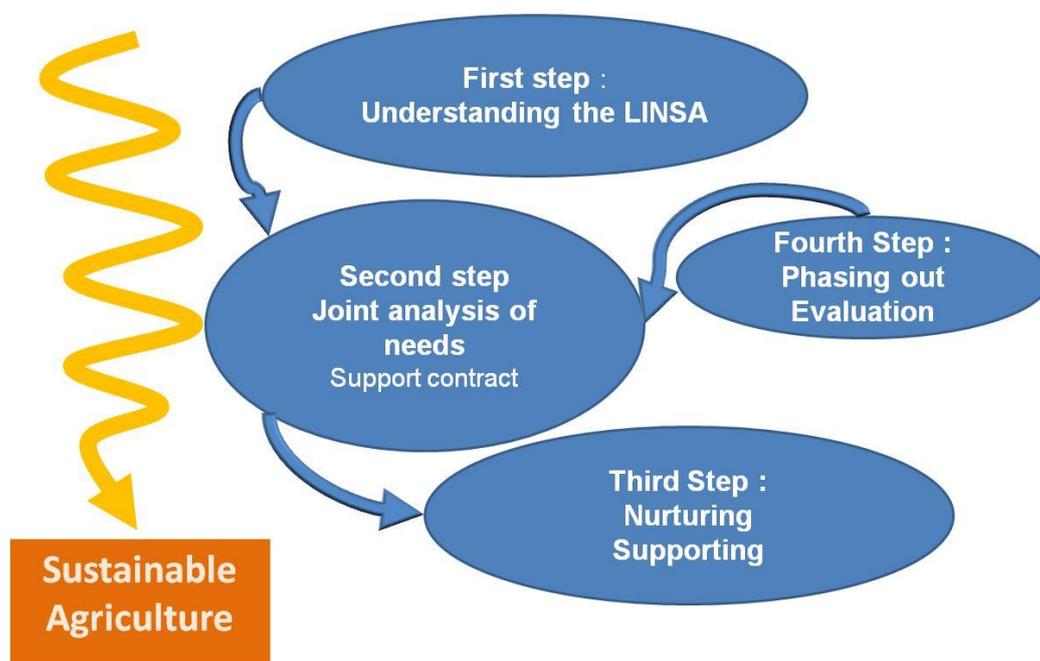


Figure 3: four steps to support LINSAs

Step 1: (Identifying a potential LINSAs, and) understanding its characteristics.

Note that the donors sometimes ask a pro-active approach, as they want really to push innovation. This is the reason why we place the identification of the LINSAs in this first step. Indeed, this is not always the case that the I-broker has to identify a LINSAs. The LINSAs themselves may contact the I-broker, and then the first step begins with the understanding of the characteristics of the LINSAs. The I-brokers should be financed to look for novelties and to explore new initiatives and new partnerships.

To identify the LINSAs, different approaches can be mobilised:

- Brokers develop a new outlook, looking beyond the usual 'boundaries' and expanding their horizons. To encourage them, their organisations should enable a very open-minded approach and enable a cultural shift if needed.
- Specific call for tenders could be open, at regional or national levels, to encourage the innovators to declare their projects and expectations. The funds should be enough attractive to encourage the innovators to participate. I-brokers could help the innovators to apply for these funds. The work of the I-brokers should be offered to the innovators, and therefore, paid by the donors.

Identification is of course more difficult at the early stages of development of a LINSAs, and specific skills should be developed by the I-brokers to identify networks committed in novelties. The I-broker can rely on its personal network inside and outside its own institution. To enhance the chances to identify a LINSAs and to establish a trustful relationship with them, the personal contacts are crucial.

Then, after identification, the understanding of the characteristics of the LINSAs is essential before bringing relevant support. To understand the LINSAs, several techniques exist: secondary data gathering (internet or paper reviews), primary data gathering (individual interviews, focus groups with the key actors of the LINSAs, and observation when participating to the meetings) are the two main complementary approaches for the characterization of the LINSAs.

The LINSAs should be characterised according to the following aspects:

- The LINSAs's players: who are the members of the LINSAs?
- The LINSAs's objectives: what is the LINSAs about, what does it aim to do?
- The scale of the LINSAs: how big is it, what is its geographical scope?
- The temporality of the LINSAs: its origin, the main steps of its developments, its history.
- The level of integration of the LINSAs in the AKIS: how are the links between the actors of the LINSAs and the formal AKIS, how is the LINSAs itself already recognized and supported by institutions of the formal AKIS?
- The level of integration of the LINSAs in its social and economical milieu: is that a novelty, a niche, a regime?
- The relevant learning and innovation processes: how does new knowledge appear and how does it disseminate?

Step 2: Joint analysis of needs, and formalising of the objectives of the supportive activities

The second step involves the I-broker working with the LINSAs members: it can be the core group of key players, or if it is already organised in an organisation, the board of this organisation. It can also be any entity (firm, association, municipality, interest group) that is active in the LINSAs. The identification of the stakeholders involved with power and influence in the LINSAs is an important step, and the choice with whom to establish the contact and then make a contract will influence the rest of the working process. To identify the LINSAs members and persons who can act as best gatekeepers to enter into a working relationship with the LINSAs is very crucial.

The objective is to have a joint analysis of the needs between the LINSAs and the supportive person. The objective is to define with the LINSAs members, in an interactive and participatory manner:

- The strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities for the LINSAs.
- The outcome challenges it could face.
- The main supporting needs of the LINSAs and the role and position of the supporting person-s (I-broker, or some other roles and positions, therefore, one or several persons).

During the joint analysis of needs, the supportive person, as being outside the LINSAs, is in a position to enable reflection by the LINSAs on the LINSAs in a new perspective. This joint analysis can be formalised in a "contract", which defines the objectives, the content of the supporting activities and the deliverables, which are defined together by the supportive person-s and the LINSAs core decision makers. At this step, the main difficulties may arise when the LINSAs is very informal, and the governance not well established. The core actors may have not defined yet precisely the decision making processes, and this can hinder or even block any contracting. In these cases, the objectives should be formulated from the part of the I-broker alone, based on his understanding of the situation and needs of the LINSAs, and communicated to the key actors, with the support of the donor (if any). Thereafter, a formal (or even informal) consultation of every involved party may help to empower the I-broker to act: when everybody has agreed about the objectives and tasks of the supportive person, its role and position is acknowledged by every party, and she/he can start his work.

Step 3: Carrying out the supporting activities

According to the stage of integration, and the stage of the development of the LINSAs, different kinds of nurturing or supporting activities can be carried out.

At this step, the broker must ask himself if she/he is the right provider or if she/he has to mobilize other persons/organisation that have the right skills. She/He must clarify what support he can provide himself as broker or as specialist. If she/he does not have the requested competencies, she/he should facilitate the identification of the appropriate person.

The broker or other experts can facilitate reflexion about many topics, including the following:

- *Learning processes and capacity building* on different topics such as technical or economic expertise, administrative and regulatory aspects, project management.
- *Governance of the LINSAs*: strategy elaboration, foresight vision, organisation development.
- View of the LINSAs members on *sustainable agriculture*.
- Analysis and organisation of *partnerships and links (or not) with the AKIS*
- *Networking and experience exchanges* with other groups or LINSAs.

Step 4: Phasing-out, evaluation of the activities, and possible definition of a new set of objectives

The evaluation of the support activities allows assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the support mechanisms, which will lead to a progressive improvement in the subsequent ones.

It is also an opportunity to define a new set of objectives for the future LINSAs and for future supporting activities.

As the LINSAs evaluate over time, the phasing-out of the collaboration between the supportive person and the LINSAs is very important. This time of phasing-out is very important to plan, and to implement progressively, with a coherent timeline which takes into account the needs of the LINSAs and not only the end of a financial support (for example). It should be discussed and anticipated as soon as possible, even in certain cases, since the beginning of the collaboration.

6 A TOOL-BOX TO SUPPORT LINSAs

The SOLINSA project has tested some of the supporting activities (needs analysis, positioning towards sustainable agriculture, organisation and governance, links with AKIS, foresight and strategy reflexions, networking, evaluation, etc.), with the use of a set of analytical approaches and participation tools or methods.

The table below presents the main steps of the support process, and step by step the innovation brokers' possible actions, and some examples of participatory methods or analytical approaches that we have tested and evaluated in the SOLINSA project.

SOLINSA support process Step by step	I-Broker's actions	Tools & methods tested in SOLINSA
Step 1: Identification and understanding the LINSAs	Apply to Tenders, Informal knowledge and relations, commitment Identifying place with the LINSAs	Interviews Literature review Meetings, observation, participation
Step 2: Joint needs analysis	Defining outcome challenges Joint analysis of the needs and expectations of the LINSAs	SWOT analysis Timelines Visioning Participatory innovation system analysis
Step 3: Specific nurturing and supporting activities	Learning processes and capacity building	Strategic games Study trips
	Governance and strategy	World Café Foresight exercise Facilitated discussion rounds Interviews
	Positioning of the LINSAs towards sustainable agriculture (when needed to precise the LINSAs strategy)	Questionnaires Q methodology Facilitated discussion rounds
	Organisation of partnership Link with AKIS	Interviews Facilitated discussion rounds
	Networking	Dissemination meetings or workshops (regional, national, cross-European)
Step 4: Evaluation	Evaluation indicators and methods	Questionnaires Group facilitation

ANNEX: LESSONS LEARNT ON THE INTERACTION PROCESS BETWEEN THE LINSIA AND THE RESEARCHERS

This part was written by Robert Home, FiBL, as co-ordinator of the SOLINSA workpackage reflecting on the methods used in SOLINSA to facilitate the work between the researchers and the LINSIA.

Skills

Both intellectual skills and people skills are needed to manage collaborations. A lot depends on persons, (both the facilitators and participants) and their competences.

Facilitation Skills/role

Managing group dynamics is critical to managing collaboration

Facilitation techniques help to support reflection processes with groups. Confidence is needed. It's important to learn workshop methods and management skills, and experience has shown that methods should be kept simple.

The role of the facilitator includes being an observer, facilitator, expert, and broker. The success of these roles can be fulfilling, but also sometimes disappointing. Flexibility and adaptability are important, including flexibility about the role. Timing is also critical.

Understanding governance helps to facilitate organizations. It's also important to understand the motivations of actors within the networks. Boundary objects are important to consolidate groups and share value. They are not small details and can contribute to overcoming tensions between theory and practice.

Reflexivity/reflectivity

It is important to be critical: to question things.

It is rewarding to work in a team: Paying attention to each other, so it makes sense to facilitate the 'team' experience. One way of doing this is to recognise the importance of meeting in person (and preferably in social as well as work contexts) so that a work space and a social space can be established. Both the work space and the social space have to be specific and matched to the situation.

Flexibility and adaptability to needs

Project design needs adaptability. To support the innovation process, innovation brokers must be flexible. This flexibility is contradictory to covering the costs faced by innovation brokers. Collaboration requires sensitivity to the network to understand their specific needs, and interaction can only begin when the networks needs are taken as a starting point.

Collective understanding

It's first necessary to understand the concept of social learning, and to include different perspectives of understanding. Trust is essential, but can only happen after people know each other. Time should be taken at the beginning of an interaction to clearly define, write down and reflect on the scope, aim and desired outcomes of the collaboration. This includes defining what is outside the scope and what is the added value.