

Solinsa project

The SOLINSA project aims to develop a framework for the development of learning and innovation networks for sustainable agriculture (LINSA). The project will explore the policy measures, financial arrangements, research, education and advisory services needed to support LINSA in a wide range of EU and other regions.

SOLINSA is funded by the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Commission.



Follow the project and download all the documents: <http://www.solinsa.org/the-solinsa-project>

The role of the transition partners


In addition to existing support, LINSA expressed needs that can be supported by different transition partners: boundary persons, experts, participatory researchers, intermediary persons, facilitators and innovation brokers as defined in the TIP. The mission of transition partners is to stimulate social learning processes, new developments respectively advancements of innovation, and network development with the aim of supporting sustainable development. Important is that these actors show a well understanding of being learners and learners. Basic attitudes are authenticity, empathy and appreciation, as well as patience and intense curiosity.



More information and documents to download: <http://www.solinsa.org/the-role-of-transition-partners>

The AKS and LINSA interaction can be reinforced

Agricultural knowledge systems (AKS) refer to formal organisations where in agricultural and rural research, advisory services, and education is done and which enable the public engagement, but also private and non-profit organisations. They are very often public bodies. LINSA is strongly interested in the AKS and their role in the rural development.



More information and documents to download: <http://www.solinsa.org/the-aks-and-linsa-interaction>

Policies supporting LINSA

Policy can be adapted in order to support LINSA and transition partners working with LINSA in a more effective and efficient way. The policy recommendations are based on the analysis of the AKS in different countries, the interaction among researchers and LINSA, the interaction among researchers and experts, the relation of existing policies supporting innovation and a policy toolbox. They focus on three angles:

- Direct support to LINSA
- Integrated activities between LINSA and AKS
- Transition Partners - support of actors working with LINSA
- LINSA scope in new networks and in the context of European innovation framework



More information and documents to download: <http://www.solinsa.org/the-policy-recommendations>

How to support LINSA?

A LINSA is ...


LINSA are networks of producers, customers, experts, NGOs, SMEs, local administrations, as well as official researchers and economists, that are mutually engaged with common goals for sustainable agriculture and rural development - exchanging sharing resources and co-producing new knowledge by creating conditions for innovation.

Depending on the kind of innovation and structure, they require different kind of support.



More information and documents to download: <http://www.solinsa.org/the-concept-of-linsa>

Map of LINSA




SOLINSA

Support of Learning and Innovation Networks for Sustainable Agriculture

Solinsa project

The SOLINSA project aims to identify barriers to the development of Learning and Innovation Networks for sustainable agriculture (LINSA). The project will explore how policy instruments, financial arrangements, research, education and advisory services might support LINSA's in cost-efficient and effective ways.

SOLINSA is funded by the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Commission.

Presentation of the project



The flyer presenting the project



Follow the project and download all the documents:
<http://www.solinsa.org/the-project/the-dissemination-events-and-material/>

A LINSA is ...

LINSA are networks of producers, customers, experts, NGOs, SMEs, local administrations, as well as official researchers and extensionists, 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.

Depending on the level of innovation and structuring, they require different kind of support.



More information and documents to download: <http://www.solinsa.org/the-results/the-concept-of-linsa/>

FACTSHEET 03

ANALYSIS OF LINSAs

Julie Ingram, Nigel Curry, James Kirwan, Damian Maye, Countryside and Community Research Institute

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01. WHAT ARE LINSAs?

Learning and Innovation Networks for Sustainable Agriculture (LINSAs) are networks of farmers, food producers, consumers, NGOs, experts and local administrations, looking for alternative ways to produce food and contribute to rural sustainable development. They operate mostly outside the main Agricultural Knowledge System (AKS) and those involved share, learn and innovate together.



02. HOW DO LINSAs EMERGE AND DEVELOP THEMSELVES?

The LINSAs emerge in different ways, from small groups of individuals with a progressive process of co-opting to the formalisation of existing networks. Common stimuli of network formation include: knowledge needs, economic rationale and collaboration. Some are loosely connected while others are well integrated. As they develop LINSAs seek legitimacy.

03. HOW IS INNOVATION TAKING PLACE IN LINSAs?

Learning and Innovation Networks of Sustainable Agriculture (LINSAs) create mutual engagement around sustainability goals in agriculture and rural development. They co-produce new knowledge by creating conditions for communication, sharing of resources and cooperation on common initiatives.

04. LINSAs INVOLVE RADICAL AND INCREMENTAL INNOVATION

LINSAs may involve radical innovation in one sense, but be incremental or conventional in another, dependent to a large extent on context and timing. Radical innovation that 'breaks the rules' can also become incorporated into a modified mainstream AKS; in this way innovation may be radical initially before subsequently becoming normalised. As such, it is crucial to understand both the process that constitutes innovation, as well as the context and timeframe in which it takes place.

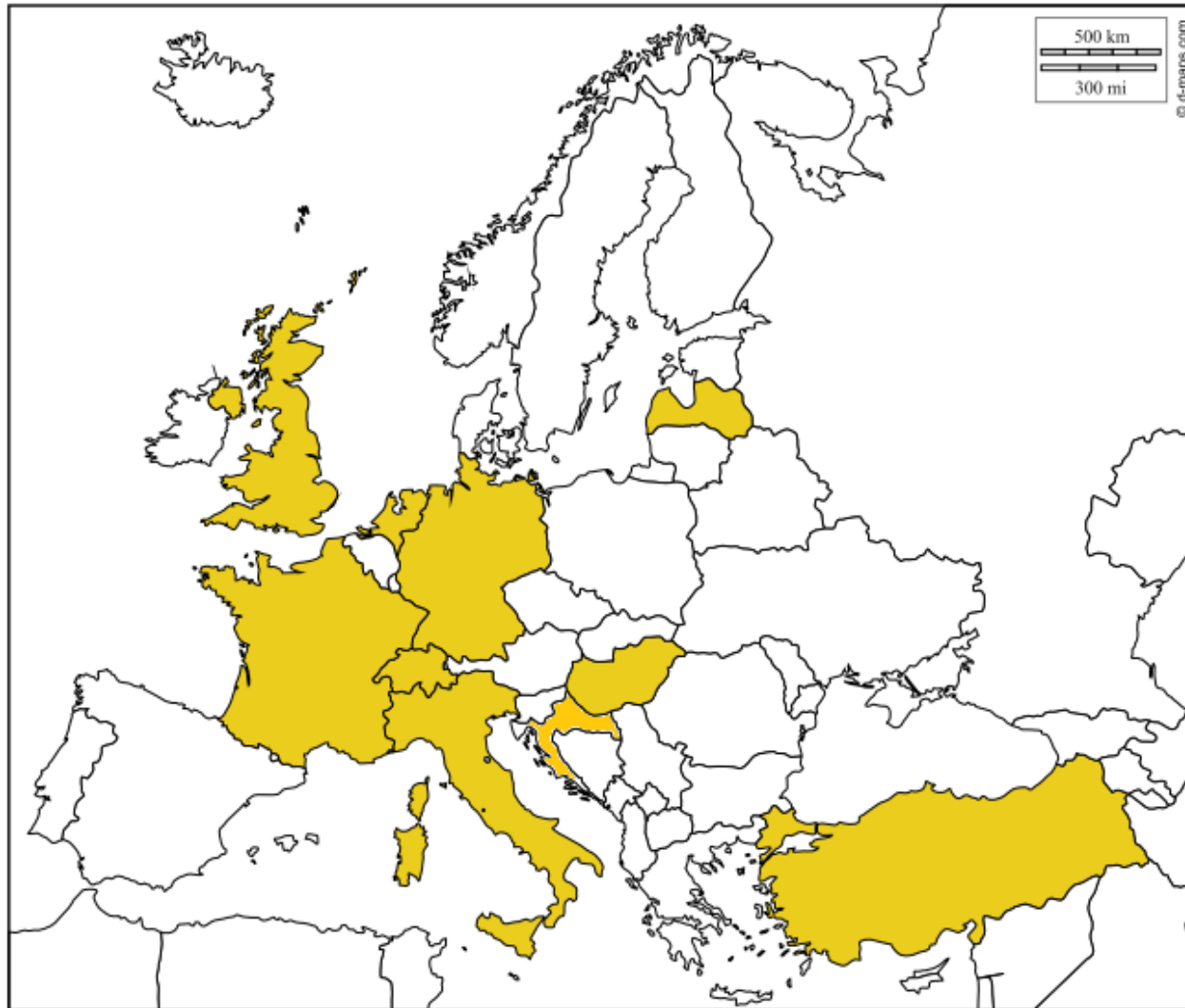
HOW TO LEARN MORE?

See the [list of LINSAs](#) on the website
A training course on how to support LINSAs will take place in Autumn 2013. If you are interested please contact: cours@agridea.ch

HOW TO SUPPORT LINSAs?

- Provide an enabling environment
- Time is needed to foster processes of innovation and learning
- Do not compromise integrity and trust of the LINSAs
- Support promising novelties to enable their transformation into a coherent niche

Map of LINSAs



List of LINSAs

Brighton and Hove Food Partnership
Permaculture Community
The European Organic Data network
Réseau Agriculture Durable
Charter of Good Agricultural Practices
in Cattle Production
Bavarian Rural Women's Association
German agricultural society
G7
The NATURAMA Alliance
Consorzio Vacche Rosse
Association for Solidary Economy
Crisoperla
Biogas Production Network
Fruit Growing Network
Cooperative Boer en Zorg
Sustainable Dairy Farming
Association for the development of
fodder production
Naturli Co-operative Cheese production

List of Shows Cases

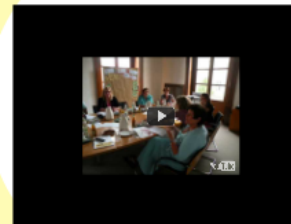
Networks in animal husbandry in the
Netherlands
Knowledge and innovation networks in
raisin production
Allmende Kontor at the former
Tempelhof airport
LINSAs emergence around the Neretva
Mandarine Geographical Indication (GI)
South Tyrol Apple Production
LINSAs and pesticide reduction in the
French vine production
Plant health clinics

The role of the transition partners

In addition to existing support, LINSa expressed needs that can be supported by different transition partners: boundary persons, experts, participatory researchers, intermediary persons, facilitators and innovation brokers as defined in the EIP. The intention of transition partners is to stimulate social learning processes, new developments respectively advancements of innovations, and network development with the aim of supporting sustainable development. Important is that these actors show a self-understanding of being learners and listeners. Basic attitudes are authenticity, empathy and appreciation, as well as patience and sincere curiosity.



We rural women!



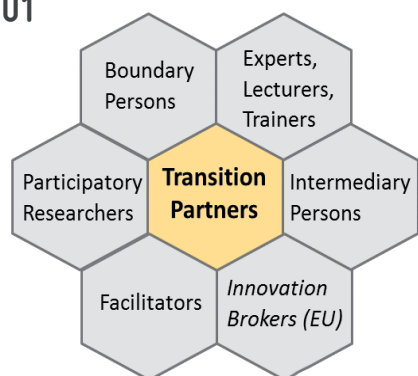
More information and documents to download: <http://www.solinsa.org/the-results/interacting-wih-linsa/>

FACTSHEET 05

TRANSITION PARTNER

Simone Helmle

01



© S. Helmle

Transition partners for learning, innovation and networking towards sustainable agriculture and rural development

01. TRANSITION PARTNER ...

Transition partner is a collective term for actors supporting LINSAs in their development in a **co-operative way**.

Important is that these actors show a self-understanding of being learners and listeners. Basic attitudes are **authenticity, empathy and appreciation, as well as patience and sincere curiosity**.

The intention of transition partners is to **stimulate social learning processes, new developments respectively advancements of innovations, and network development** with the aim of supporting sustainable development.

02. ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF TRANSITION PARTNERS

Support through transition partners happens in different roles and functions:

- Internal strengthening and advancement of the LINSAs, in the role of a **facilitator**.
- Participatory data collection and analysis with a group of LINSAs members, in the role of a **participatory researcher**.
- Methodological support in the development and establishment of boundary objects, in the role of a **boundary person**.
- Technical support in the development and establishment of boundary objects, in the role of an **expert, lecturer or trainer**.
- Support in improving recognition of LINSAs in the AKIS and in increasing networking activities, in the role of an **intermediary person**.
- Support of LINSAs in developing European Innovation Partnerships and Operational Groups, in the role of an **EU innovation broker**.

HOW TO SUPPORT TRANSITION PARTNERS?

- Training in participative methods and analytical competences to understand the complexity of social learning, innovation and networking
- Transition partner networks, for collegial support, personal development of basic attitudes, and discussion of own visions of change
- Training for participatory research, and incentives for practice-research co-operation

HOW TO LEARN MORE?

A great summary of the project on our website: www.solinsa.net

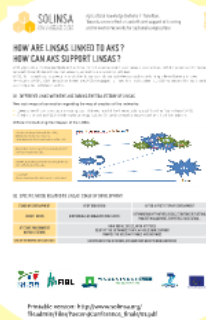
HOW TO SUPPORT LINSAS?

- Increase the self-awareness of LINSAs and LINSAs capabilities
- Enhance social learning and participative development of boundary objects
- Improved embedment in the AKIS, as well as in cross-sectoral knowledge systems

The AKS and LINSA interaction can be reinforced

Agricultural Knowledge Systems (AKS) refer to formal organizations active in agricultural and rural research, advisory services, and education. It does not only imply the public organizations, but also private and non-profit organizations. They are very often public funded. LINSA do emerge outside or inside the AKS. Resistance and tension are often observed.

The interactions between LINSA and AKS are challenging for both sides!



More information and documents to download: <http://www.solinsa.org/the-results/the-relation-between-aks-and-linsa/>



HOW ARE LINSAS LINKED TO AKS? HOW CAN AKS SUPPORT LINSAS?

AKS (Agricultural Knowledge System): traditional public funded education and research and advice, institutionalised and formalised as a set of specific tasks to various research, education and advisory institutes.

AKIS (I for innovation): includes all kind of other formal and informal activities and actors performing different tasks and roles.

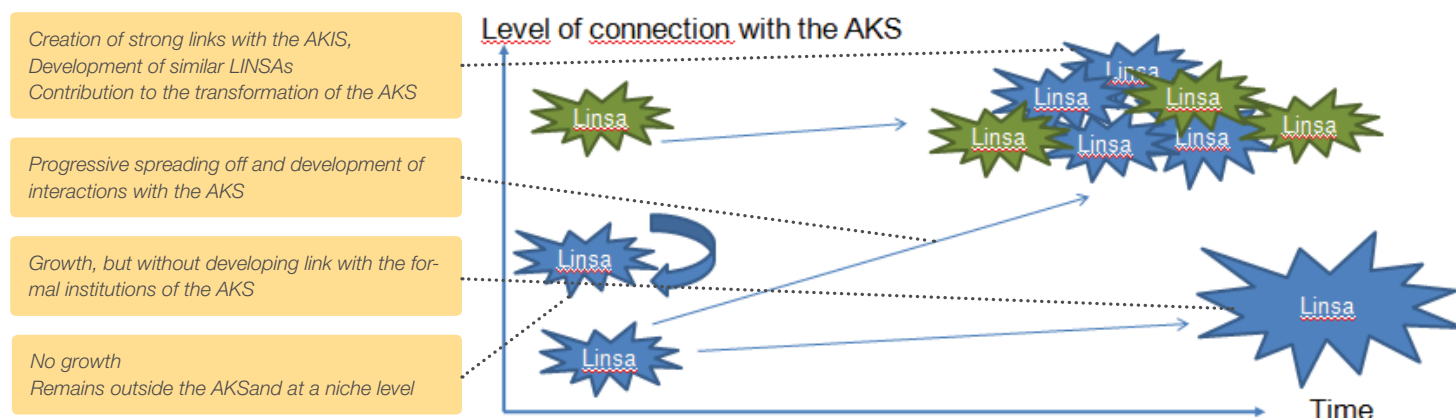
→ Focus on AKS-LINSA interactions to see how AKS is engaged in, linked to or participates in LINSA by means of formal projects and programs, institutes or actors.

01. DIFFERENT LINKS WITH THE AKS DURING THE TRAJECTORY OF LINSAS

Two main ways of connection regarding the way of creation of the networks:

- Development from individual and small group initiatives, most of the time voluntarily apart from the “main stream” AKS.
- Creation inside the AKS, to foster sustainable agriculture. Connections exist already since the birth of the network.

Different links during the lifespan of the LINSA



02. SPECIFIC NEEDS RELATED TO LINSAS' STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT	VERY BEGINNING	AFTER A FIRST STEP OF DEVELOPMENT
LINSAS' NEEDS	NURTURING AND ORGANISATION NEEDS	NETWORKING WITH OTHER LINSAS, STRATEGIC REFLECTION, PROJECT MANAGEMENT, EXPERTISE, FACILITATION...
AT STAKE FOR BROKERS OR FACILITATORS	HIGH SOCIAL SKILLS, OPEN ATTITUDE IDENTIFY THE NETWORKS THAT CAN NEED SOME SUPPORT PROVIDE THE RELEVANT TOOLS AND METHODS	
WHO ARE THE BROKERS OR FACILITATORS?	INDEPENDENT FACILITATORS, RESEARCHERS OR EXTENSION OFFICERS	

FACTSHEET 02

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EUROPEAN AKS

Frans Hermans, Laurens Klerkx, Dirk Roep, Wageningen UR, The Netherlands

01

	Universities	Extension	Consultancy	Government	Agro-food	Unions	NGOs
Infrastructure							
Laws & regulations							
Values & culture							
Networks							
Capabilities							
Market structure							

Innovation System Performance Matrix
(K. Woolthuis et al. 2005)

EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (AKS) HAVE A COMMON DIVERSITY

All countries studied report a diversified landscape of both formal and newly emerging informal organisations and share common trends:

- Traditional categories of fundamental and applied research are disappearing
- A distinction between commercial and non-profit advisory systems is weakening
- Agricultural education is struggling due to lack of funds, a lack of students, or both

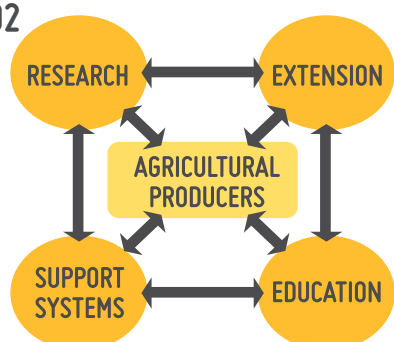
DISTINCTION BETWEEN OPEN AND CLOSED AKS

- A closed AKS is more manageable. The lines of communication are short and there is a shared vision on the future. However new information and actors have difficulty getting recognized
- In an open AKS the range of knowledge suppliers is broader, but end-users can get lost in the abundance of information. Bottom-up initiatives have easier access to formal research institutions, however government still has difficulty in steering the AKS in a sustainable direction as there is no consensus over the direction of the agricultural sector.

INNOVATION POLICIES COULD BE IMPROVED

Innovation policies are often incoherent and bureaucratic, focussing on short term results. At the same time the result and learning effects of innovation programmes are not systemically documented and feedback mechanisms are not formalised.

02



Agricultural Knowledge System (AKS)
(Source: Rivera, 2005)

HOW TO LEARN MORE ?

Download the report *A synthesis of the comparative analysis of the AKS in 8 countries* on: **www.solinsa.net** to answer two main research questions:

What are the main characteristics of the AKS in each country?

How can these countries systematically be compared?

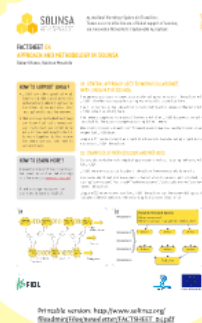
HOW TO SUPPORT LINSAs ?

- There is a need for innovation funding that also values the 'soft' social outcomes of innovation projects
- Cultural predispositions can hinder or foster collaborative innovation networks.
- Highly competitive environments make information sharing and collaboration more difficult
- Farmers, consultants, extension workers, researchers and scientists all need to develop skills to communicate more effectively across disciplines

Policies supporting LINSAs

Policies can be adapted in order to support LINSAs and transition partners working with LINSAs in a more effective and efficient way. The policy recommendations are based on the analysis of the AKS in different countries, the interaction among researchers and LINSAs, the interaction among researchers and experts, the review of existing policies supporting innovation and a policy workshops. They focus on four angles:

- Direct support to LINSAs
- Improved alliances between LINSAs and AKS
- Transition Partners – support of actors working with LINSAs
- LINSAs scope in new networks and in the context of European Innovation Partnership



More information and documents to
download: [http://www.solinsa.org/the-
results/policy-recommendations/](http://www.solinsa.org/the-results/policy-recommendations/)

FACTSHEET 04

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY IN SOLINSA

Robert Home, Heidrun Moschitz

HOW TO SUPPORT LINSAs?

- LINSAs are often great at what they do but often lack the skills to systematically reflect. They can be supported by being shown how: helping them to help themselves.
- Methods are most effective if they are those that both researcher and participant are comfortable with, so the best way to start is to work together to find where the needs are and how best to address them.

HOW TO LEARN MORE?

A great summary of the project and the ideas behind the methodology is in the video on www.solinsa.net.

A methodology manual will be published at the end of 2013.

01. GENERAL APPROACH USED TO WORK/COLLABORATE WITH LINSAs IN THE SOLINSA

The general approach is based around alternating workshops or interactions with LINSAs in the field and capacity building workshops for project partners.

The principle behind the interactions is participatory action research: We work with LINSAs rather than study them.

The research agenda is dynamic! The work with the LINSAs focuses on what is important for them, and changes according to their needs.

We look for common issues from 17 case studies so we can identify common challenges that LINSAs face.

Diagram 01 below shows the project structure with the alternating project workshops and LINSAs interactions.

02. EXAMPLES OF METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

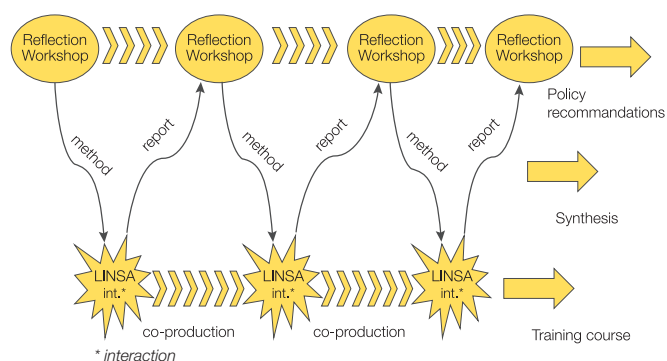
Collaborations started with negotiating a shared direction, including methods, with the LINSAs.

LINSAs members could participate in interactions they were comfortable with.

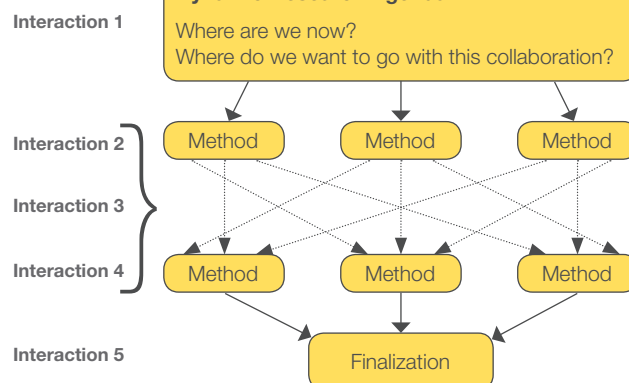
A wide variety of methods were used in the workshops, depending on context, including 'open space', 'world café', 'systems analysis', 'participatory video' and web based interactions.

Diagram 02 below shows how the LINSAs interactions had the same starting point, but used different methods, before coming to a common final point.

01



02



FACTSHEET 06

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS — HOW TO SUPPORT LINSAs

Simone Helmle, Stefan Burkart



01. AIMS OF THE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ARE ...

- to strengthen LINSAs potentials, self-awareness and capabilities
- to improve alliances between LINSAs and AKIS
- to enhance the LINSAs scope in new networks and in the EIP context

02. THE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS CONSIDER ...

- the process character and powerful dynamics of social learning
- the various phases of the diffusion of innovations
- the complexity of networking and the diversity in multiactor-networks

03. HOW TO SUPPORT LINSAs DIRECTLY ?

- soft skills development to improve communication, management and governance
- reflection periods and process monitoring
- boundary object development
- travel costs / expense allowances
- operational / running costs
- training / educational offers
- restructuration and simplification of funding schemes

04. HOW TO IMPROVE ALLIANCES BETWEEN LINSAs AND AKIS ?

- dissemination of LINSAs activities and products to improve the recognition of LINSAs
- support of intermediary persons who know about LINSAs knowledge and how to consult LINSAs
- transdisciplinary and participatory research projects to enable LINSAs-researcher collaborations
- establishing multi-actor and cross-sectoral trainings and conferences, applying participatory approaches

05. LINSAs AND THE EUROPEAN INNOVATION PARTNERSHIPS

- EIP can be a chance for LINSAs participating in Operational Groups or setting up an Operational Group. LINSAs need open, but protected spaces for creativity, experimentation, for trial and error. That sets impulses for the development of innovations.
- Due to the limited period of time of Operational Groups, LINSAs offer a long-term structure which allows continuing what has been developed in projects in the EIP context.
- EIP Innovation brokers are understood as a specific role of transition partners.

TRANSITION PARTNERS

have a key position in supporting LINSAs in their further development. Transition partners support LINSAs in the role of:

- Facilitators
- Participative researchers
- Boundary persons
- Trainers, lecturers, experts
- Intermediary persons
- EU innovation brokers



HOW TO LEARN MORE ?

A great summary of the project on our website: www.solinsa.net