

# Achieving Impact

Version 1.0



**How to  
Guide**

# SHARING, DISSEMINATING AND CREATING A LEGACY

This 'How to Guide' explores ways to maximise the use and impact of the outputs and achievements of co-innovation projects.

The multi-actor project LIAISON (Better Rural Innovation: Linking Actors, Instruments and Policies through Networks) has been studying ways of speeding up innovation in agriculture, forestry and related sectors. Transformation and change in these areas are the results of actions and interactions between a diverse range of people brought together and engaged in the process of generating, exchanging and using knowledge. Participation in multi-actor co-innovation projects is a process that has wider impacts: resulting in cultural, values and behavioural change across the group and at an individual level. This How to Guide sets out the benefits of having a clear, detailed and well-planned **dissemination strategy** for the results and innovative solutions developed by such projects. It shows how innovation groups can **embed the achievement of impact** in their co-innovation activities and highlights how this success can be **measured and evaluated**.

## PLANNING AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

### Getting it right from the start – the basis of change

Innovation and knowledge resulting from a group's co-innovation process will be shared and embedded within the partnership but will achieve a far greater impact if it also influences or inspires others outside of this original core group. This both requires planning and the involvement of the right people from the very beginning and throughout the participatory process of working together as a group of innovative partners.

#### LIAISON TOOLS

Journey mapping and impact stories provide ways to translate the experiences of learning through co-innovation, presented in a way that can be effectively understood by others.

From the outset it is important to create a communications plan that targets potential users of the outcomes of the innovation process and other relevant stakeholders in a position to influence decision-making and changes in practices. The plan should address how a project's outputs will be shared, how these new practices, ideas or research came into being, what was learnt along the way, and their practical benefits.

### Effective models for dissemination

Sharing ideas and results with a wider audience, requires resources: both time and personnel. There is merit in establishing dedicated activities for dissemination, and in some cases (especially with larger-scale projects) this is a specific requirement of the funder. However, smaller initiatives may find it more difficult to generate the momentum to share their new ideas and innovative solutions within their available resources. Linking with other existing initiatives, or forming new innovation networks, can help to overcome this obstacle.

A key challenge is to achieve effective listening – encouraging people in the group to make the effort and take the time to listen to other people's perspectives, experiences and ideas. People feel more trusted in a group that they feel listens to them.

There are ways in which projects can improve knowledge-sharing and dissemination. For example, 'practice led innovation networks' and 'farmer innovation groups' or similar structures can help develop co-innovation within a consortium and carry this beyond a project's lifespan and into the future.

LIAISON's case studies found different ways in which this goal was achieved, for example:

- *Tous Paysans* involved stakeholders from the beginning of the process and created a video and flyer to help share the collective method and its results.
- *AgroCycle* developed a comprehensive 'educational platform', focused on children, to share their key messages.
- *Food Heroes* had a novel approach to engagement commencing the project with an exhibition (during

Dutch Design Week) to showcase the project before it started.

- *10-Frame Beehive* used social media for dissemination.

LIAISON TOOLS		
Actor/role	identification (ID)	and personas: understanding our stakeholders – can increase reflexive awareness of cultural variety.

See the **CONNECTED PARTNERSHIPS: How to Guide** for more information.

### Embedding the outputs of co-innovation initiatives into existing knowledge exchange activities

One effective way of sharing a project’s experiences to a wider audience is by involving farming and other stakeholders from the outset, including in the preparation of the project proposal. This will provide a sense of ownership and motivate them to adopt the outcomes of the project at a later date.

As shown in the **CONNECTED PARTNERSHIPS: How to Guide**, the co-innovation process can be improved when fertilised or stimulated by ideas from outside the group. A consortium can benefit from collaborating with relevant external stakeholders, such as farmers’ or consumers’ associations, that are keen to support its communication strategy. Farmers’ networks, in particular, can help spread knowledge quickly to and between farmers.

For certain types of innovation such as a new practice it is important to focus and engage with *‘champions’* to help to disseminate an innovation within a specific target group. A *champion* is someone who has already built credibility with the target group. Involving them can be an effective strategy in building wider engagement and achieving long-term impact.

See the **CONNECTED PARTNERSHIPS: How to Guide** for more information.

## ‘MAKING A DIFFERENCE’ – HOW TO ENCOURAGE ADOPTION

### Setting targets (and boundaries) for disseminating the results of co-innovation projects

Multi-actor projects should establish how far and wide they want the outputs of their dissemination activity to go. Sometimes this will be pre-determined by the funder, who will have a view on the level of change or desired impact. For example, Moore et al. (2015) identified three approaches for achieving impact (“scaling”) from social innovations: “scaling up, scaling out, scaling deep”.

- “*Scaling up*” is about increasing the number of people who are influenced to adopt a new practice or technology.
- “*Scaling out*” refers to changing institutions at the level of policy, rules and law.
- “*Scaling deep*” involves changing relationships, cultural values and beliefs.

The importance of scaling to achieve change and effective transformation should not be dismissed. It is not a uni-directional process, as knowledge flows throughout an effectively managed co-innovation process. This helps to form and evolve the outputs throughout the duration of the activity and helps to refine the innovative technical, organisational or social solutions that can be shared with the target groups.

The LIAISON project found differences in the ways that co-innovation partnerships set out to meet this objective. Some of these approaches contributed to their success in this regard, while others limited it. This said, not all partnerships seek to foster broader change, and may have more limited, but equally important, objectives.

### The ‘best’ strategies for scaling knowledge and innovations

Not all partnerships aim to scale innovations, though their impact will be greater if they adopt one or more types of scaling. There are a range of scaling strategies that partnerships can adopt to share the knowledge and innovations that they have generated to make them more widely available.

Here are some examples of effective scaling strategies identified by the LIAISON project:

- **‘Scaling out’** emphasises the replication of successful innovations in different communities (or ‘niches’) with the aim of spreading those results to more people. This has been proved to be particularly effective when dealing with context specific issues that affect the system they are trying to change. For example, the *Agrolora* initiative worked with water unions and farmers to achieve this.
- Many initiatives, such as *Programa de Sustentabilidade de Vinhos do Alentejo*, *Arena Skog*, *L’Atelier Paysan* and *10Frame Beehive*, made their mark by advocating and lobbying for changes in regulations, or **‘scaling up’** to affect policies. The policy level arguably has ‘the largest impact’ as it has the power to change the ‘rules of the game’.
- Strategies for **‘scaling deep’** are related to the notion that lasting change is only achieved when people’s hearts and minds, their values and cultural practices, and the quality of their relationships, are transformed. The scaling deep concept, often emerged, albeit often implicitly. For example, the *Nod Verde* case study helped to change the mindset of producers who started to engage in food-hubs in order to sell directly to consumers, while fostering a better understanding of, and more support for, producers amongst consumers.

It is relevant to point out that sometimes the effort required to scale might not be worthwhile for more limited, timebound or resource-scarce projects.

### Factors that contribute to the successful dissemination of outputs

Although dissemination may be embedded in a project as an official objective there is still a need for a focused drive to share the results once they are known. LIAISON identified four success factors in disseminating the outputs of co-innovation projects.

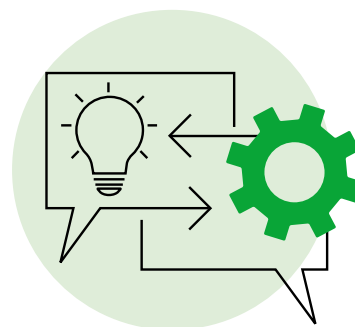
- **Openness** – providing transparency on the sources and the basic assumptions for all output and information disseminated by the project.
- **Clarity** – providing clear information, making sure implementation is simple, and avoiding jargon whenever possible.
- **Motivation** – finding a common interest, specific need or goal, such as a willingness to contribute to the local economy or proactively networking to promote the output and enhance the project’s impact.

- **Resources** – sharing the financial risk or costs, having procedures and resources in place to support others through training and advice on how to best use the innovation

It is important to be aware that potential users of an innovation may go through different phases before successfully adopting it and that people will have different expectations in terms of the speed and scale of adoption of the innovation and its likely impacts. For example, farmers may adopt new practices incrementally through making small changes. This may be because they lack the resources to make a large investment or are concerned about risks. For any business it is important to have evidence of the likely benefits (and costs) of adopting an innovative solution or product.

Crucially, improving the uptake of the project’s results requires involving the right people from the outset of the project: for example, partnerships where farmers and their associations were not initially involved in the struggle to engage and reach practice-based networks when seeking to implement their results. Tools for mapping and planning the network that will be needed around a co-innovation project can be found within the **LIAISON Interactive Innovation Tool Box**. These can help identify the ‘right’ type and variety of stakeholders to involve.

### Possible obstacles to sharing results and the uptake of new ideas



A group can increase their success in sharing their findings by considering how they adapt and present their message and the relevant information to make it accessible and interesting for particular target audiences. When doing so, it is important to be aware that there are some obstacles that need to be identified and overcome.

For example, if an activity requires an investment, access to funding will be a key for its adoption. Groups should dedicate time to exploring where funding can be accessed from or form partnerships to help lobby

for investment. Consequently, access to funding can often turn out to be an extra and unforeseen ‘project’ within the project.

See the **COMING TOGETHER: How to Guide** for more information.

There may also be cultural and communication barriers that make it difficult to convey the messages and benefits to effectively encourage others to adopt an innovation or new idea. This is when the involvement of potential end-users in the co-innovation process can bear fruit as it helps to identify and respond to their real needs and thereby help overcome any potential barriers to dissemination.

Adoption of some innovations can be slowed down or even blocked by regulatory and legal issues. In some of the case studies reviewed by LIAISON the strategy of getting more people to replicate the innovation helped make the innovation more visible and added power and weight to their position, helping influence institutions and regulators to consider changing their approach. For examples of this see *Programa de Sustentabilidade de Vinhos do Alentejo* and *L’Atelier Paysan*.

Lack of confidence around the prospects and needs of a business, or a degree of scepticism about the value of the innovation can also hinder projects. This resistance can often be overcome if others are seen to successfully adopt it.

## LIAISON TOOLS

Gender appraisal and empowerment appraisal –these are helpful tools in evaluating the presence of biases and supporting empowered, diverse participation

## RESPONDING TO SOCIETAL CHALLENGES

### Identifying impact at a systems level



LIAISON’s in-depth analysis of 32 case studies helped identify a few factors that are key to identifying a project’s impact. It appeared that, farmers and foresters in particular, found it quite difficult to understand the full of extent of the impact of an innovation they had created together. We list some of the reasons for this below:

- It may be hard to recognise and appreciate the value of an activity to the wider community, who are not necessarily directly involved in the innovation
- Difficulties in changing people’s mindsets and in supporting the creation of attitudes that are receptive to change
- Economic benefits can be easier to assess (and more immediate) than other benefits (i.e. environmental and societal)
- While people may understand that some actions and changes may for example, mitigate the impact on the climate, they may not sufficiently value their personal role in contributing to this.

It is important to take time to understand, track and translate the differences amongst stakeholders’ situations and objectives, as well as building confidence in farmers and foresters of their capacity to achieve considerable impact when working together.

### Engaging the next generation

Across the case studies explored by LIAISON and rural communities in general there is a shared concern about youth migration and reluctance to take over the family farm.

Multi-actor innovation projects, with a focus on new solutions, can provide an effective way to engage

the next generation in collaboration with other practitioners as well as supporting their involvement in rural activities. One of LIAISON's 'ambassador projects' *Green Workshop Wenland* focused on this issue through inviting university students to design workshops as part of an initiative to attract skilled workers and young people to the area.

In considering making staying in rural areas an attractive option for the next generation it is also important to account for gender and diversity.

### LIAISON TOOLS

**Appraisal of group dynamics** assesses trust, willingness to share information and general social well-being in a group context.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

### Effectively managing a public/private partnership to maximise its impact

Public-private partnerships aiming to stimulate and scale innovation need to understand from the outset whether the participants have the same objectives, particularly in terms of what happens once the co-innovation process is completed. People may have different ambitions in terms of scaling (e.g. a private partner might not be interested in upscaling an innovation due to Intellectual Property (IP) issues and the risk of losing competitive advantage) and there may also be differences in organisational culture, capacities and funding between private and public partners.

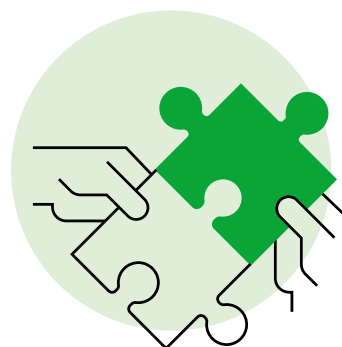
Potential issues regarding IP should be addressed during the early stages of the development of a co-innovation project and a decision made on how these will be managed. This will also help to determine whether particular types of funding sources are appropriate e.g. publicly funded projects may require future open access for the innovative products and results of a project. In some cases this may mean that a particular individual or business will prefer not to take part in the project.

### Managing time constraints on dissemination

Many projects are only funded for two to three years and it is often difficult to show tangible results in such a short time period, especially when the partnerships have been formed 'from scratch' for a project. For this reason it is important not to exaggerate the expected impacts of a project. Even limited success can open the

doors to future collaborations and the further development of the partnership.

### Building a sustainable partnership



It can sometimes be difficult to predict whether a partnership will continue beyond the initial project period (e.g. the duration of the funding). One of the most relevant factors in improving the likelihood of future collaboration is building trust. Partners will come to rely on each other to meet deadlines and shared commitments, although there will also be times when they disagree. Basic rules around communication and collaboration set out at the start of the partnership will help to resolve conflicts and help ensure a long-term trust-based relationship.

for more on working in partnerships see the **HEALTHY PARTNERSHIPS: How to Guide**

### LIAISON TOOLS

**Economic evaluation tools** – a wide range of tools exist including cost-benefit analysis, return on investment or social return on investment. Each has its advantages and disadvantages.

**Scientometrics** – measurements such as impact factor, science citation index, author-level metrics, patents, etc.

**Altmetrics** – include (but are not limited to) peer reviews, citations on wikipedia and in public policy documents, discussions on research blogs, mainstream media coverage, bookmarks on reference managers such as Mendeley, and mentions on social networks, such as Twitter

**Monitoring tool for (external) impacts** – the external impact referring to the project's relevance in relation to social challenges / policy goals

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION



### How to effectively measure the impact of a co-innovation project

The innovation process itself and its long-term impacts are key aspects when evaluating co-innovation projects. Ongoing evaluation of the process can help the group achieve its objectives and thereby increase the final impacts of an intervention. The process of co-innovation may also be an important impact in itself. Impacts should not just be measured at the end of a project but should be evaluated throughout the entire process, either continuously or periodically and, ideally, some time afterward.

Some impacts of a co-innovation process may emerge after the project period has come to an end. Awareness of these impacts can give those involved greater satisfaction of having invested money and effort in a fruitful partnership.

The LIAISON project helped co-design evaluations with a number of case study groups. The approaches used focused on both the processes and the relational ties between group members. From this process it emerged that ‘learning and transformation’ of individual members can be a positive and beneficial impact arising from participation in a co-innovation project.

LIAISON identified the enhancement of stakeholders’ capabilities and capacity as one area for improvement. A number of tools exist to enhance these aspects of a co-innovation partnership and these can be found in and these can be found in the Tool Box of evaluation and impact assessment tools.

### Effectively measuring long-term impacts

One of the challenges in co-innovation is evaluating the success – or otherwise – of the interactions and processes surrounding a project, particularly since innovation processes are difficult to control and their

results may be unexpected. ‘Softer’ outcomes, such as relationship improvements and trust-building are difficult to quantify. However, such evaluation is needed for several reasons, including future project design and demonstrating ‘value-added’ to funders.

It is not always easy pinpoint the changes generated by a specific intervention, as such changes may also be the (partly) the result of external influences. Co-innovation projects are subject to a range of different influences, which may reside within, or beyond, the project itself. Such effect of influences may be difficult to capture within standard project evaluation procedures. In response to this, LIAISON has developed an interactive Tool box to assist consortiums in planning and implementing their monitoring and evaluation strategies.

## ABOUT THE LIAISON ‘HOW TO GUIDES’

LIAISON has developed five ‘How to Guides’ to support practitioners taking part in co-innovation initiatives. For the purpose of these guides a ‘practitioner’ is any actor seeking to take part in or provide direct support for partners in co-operation initiatives or projects which innovate through a participatory processes.

LIAISON (Better Rural Innovation: Linking Actors, Instruments and Policies through Networks) is a multi-actor project which has been funded within the EIP Agri, an initiative launched by the European Commission in 2012 with its goal of fostering competitive and sustainable agriculture and forestry that “achieves more and better from less”.

The interactive innovation approach brings together a diverse range of public and private innovation actors (farmers, advisors, researchers, businesses, NGOs etc.) with complementary knowledge and experience to appraise, gather, co-create and disseminate practical solutions to the real needs of farmers and foresters. These needs are driven by, and derived from, the real opportunities and day-to-day challenges faced by farmers, foresters and rural businesses. The innovations generated through an interactive approach can deliver solutions that are well adapted to circumstances and which are easier to implement.

LIAISON has compiled a handbook on participatory methods for co-innovation initiatives, plus also a Tool Box of evaluation and impact assessment tools.

The information in this guide is for general informational purposes only. Readers are advised to check any information against regulations or ways of working in their own locale. Any use of this information is at your own risk.



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### Coming Together

### Good Planning

### Healthy Partnerships

### Connected Partnerships

### Achieving Impact

These guides highlight what we have learned from LIAISON's activities and data collection. The aim is to help all that use them enhance the way they co-innovate in farming, forestry and rural development.

The Achieving Impact Guide was written by Helen Aldis, Ana Allamand and Simone Osborn with contributions from Liz Bowles, Evelien Cronin, Andrew Fieldsend, Susanne von Münchhausen, and Eleonore Pommier. Thanks are also due to the partners in the LIAISON project that undertook the case studies cited in this guide.

