



Soil-X-Change



**Funded by
the European Union**

**INITIATIVE OF FOSTERING CROSS-BORDER
KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND CO-CREATION
ON SUSTAINABLE SOIL AND FARM MANAGEMENT**

Soil-X-Change has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe Framework Programme, Coordination and Support Actions under grant agreement No. 101133914



Soil-X-Change

*Fostering cross-border knowledge exchange and
co-creation on sustainable soil and farm management*

Deliverable 2.9 Outcome report of events organized with AKISs in the first half of the project

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DEC	Websites, patent fillings, videos, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>			
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Project management	Institution	
Person in charge	Gabor Vicze	Innomine
Work package	WP2	
Work package leader	Daniel Ács	BEC
Author(s)	Tatiana Bullová	BEC
Addition Contributors	NNFs	AKI, AMB, ATB, BOKU, CDR, KGZS, NAAS, UNISS
Reviewers	Evgeniya Borisova	NAAS
	Gábor Király	AKI
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List of Abbreviations

AKIS	Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System
AKIS CBs	Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System Coordination Bodies
AKI	Research Institute of Agricultural Economics
ATB	The Leibniz Institute for Agricultural Engineering and Bioeconomy
BEC	Bioeconomy Cluster
BOKU	University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna
CDR	Centre for Agricultural Advisory Services
EIP-AGRI	Agricultural European Innovation Partnership
KGZS	The Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia
NAAS	National Agricultural Advisory Services
NN	National Node
NNF	National Node Facilitator
OG	Operational Group





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Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of how Soil-X-Change project partners have engaged with Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) and their Coordination Bodies (CBs) during the first half of the project. Building upon the formal letters of support collected in Deliverable D2.6: 9 Letters of Support signed by AKIS Coordination Bodies from Member States, this document highlights practical cooperation efforts, identifies barriers, and outlines visions for future collaboration across the nine partner countries.

AKIS CBs play a pivotal role in the Soil-X-Change network by linking research, practice, and policy. They support the dissemination of project results, enable stakeholder engagement, and provide institutional backing for integrating soil-related innovations into national frameworks. The level and form of engagement varied between countries, influenced by institutional structures, capacity constraints, and political contexts.

A survey distributed to all National Node Facilitators (NNFs) captured key insights, which were further enriched through qualitative analysis and country-specific narratives. Common forms of cooperation included co-organization of events, survey promotion, mapping and support of EIP AGRI Operational Groups (OGs), and knowledge sharing through advisory networks and national platforms.

Despite progress, many partners face challenges such as unclear mandates of AKIS CBs, limited resources, fragmented governance structures, and inconsistent engagement. All partners expressed strong commitment to strengthening these relationships and highlighted concrete ambitions for the future ranging from dashboard promotion and policy recommendation development to integration with CAP networks and farmer-facing tools.

Country specific narratives illustrate a spectrum of engagement. While some countries (e.g., Bulgaria, Austria, Hungary) have already achieved deep cooperation, others (e.g., Slovenia, Spain) remain in earlier stages of engagement, with potential for growth. The report demonstrates that the collaboration with AKIS is not only beneficial but essential to achieve the project objectives of knowledge co-creation, scaling of soil practices, and systemic innovation. As the project progresses into its second half, reinforcing AKIS collaboration will be critical due to foreseen result from the project which are of great importance for farmers and need to be disseminated widely. The active involvement of AKIS CBs will ensure that the project results, and insights are embedded into national advisory services and policy frameworks ultimately making sustainable soil management a mainstream practice across Europe.





Introduction

This report summarizes the cooperation between Soil-X-Change project partners and Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) and AKIS Coordination Bodies (CBs) during the first half of the project. It complements Deliverable D2.6: 9 Letters of Support signed by AKIS Coordination Bodies from Member States by providing a qualitative overview of how project partners have engaged with their national AKIS systems during the first half of the Soil-X-Change project. While D2.6 documents the formal establishment of cooperation through signed letters of support, this report captures the practical forms of collaboration, barriers encountered, and visions for future engagement expressed by each national node facilitator (NNF). Together, the two deliverables offer a holistic picture of how AKIS engagement is evolving both formally and operationally across the nine participating countries.

1 Role of AKIS CB in Soil-X-Change network in context of D2.6

The AKIS CBs play a strategic role in the Soil-X-Change network, acting as both national-level gatekeepers of knowledge systems and multipliers of innovation in sustainable soil and farm management. Their role is central to achieving the project's goals of cross-border knowledge exchange, co-creation, and policy impact.

AKIS CBs serve a pivotal role as connectors between national innovation systems and European efforts to promote sustainable soil and farm management. As central nodes in national AKIS frameworks, these bodies help facilitate stakeholder engagement by mobilizing a broad range of actors including farmers, advisors, researchers, and policymakers to participate in project activities such as surveys, workshops, and knowledge exchange events.

They also may play a key part in enhancing the visibility and dissemination of Soil-X-Change results. They support the promotion of tools like the project dashboard (once it will be launched in M18) and good practice examples through national CAP networks, newsletters, thematic platforms, and relevant soil-related events, thereby extending the project's reach.

Another vital function of the AKIS CBs is providing institutional endorsement. By issuing formal letters of support as documented in D2.6: 9 Letters of Support signed by AKIS Coordination Bodies from Member States, they signal strategic and political alignment with the goals of the Soil-X-Change project. This formal backing is an important step toward ensuring the long-term integration of project outputs into national agricultural and innovation policies. In addition, AKIS CBs contribute to policy coherence by sharing insights on CAP implementation and helping to embed soil health within national AKIS agendas. Finally, in several countries, AKIS CBs act as bridges between research and practice. By connecting scientific outputs with practitioners such as advisors, educators, and OGs, they ensure that innovation does not remain isolated in expert circles but reaches those who implement change on the ground.

The degree to which AKIS CBs are able to fulfil these roles varies between countries, shaped by differences in institutional capacity, mandate clarity, and engagement culture. Nonetheless, their active participation





remains essential for anchoring Soil-X-Change efforts at national level and amplifying their impact across the European agricultural knowledge ecosystem.

2 Methodology - Survey

To assess the status of cooperation between project partners AKIS within the Soil-X-Change project, a structured online questionnaire was developed and distributed to all NNFs. The survey aimed to capture qualitative insights into current collaboration, perceived barriers, and future plans related to AKIS and AKIS CBs.

The survey was designed using Google Forms and included a combination of closed multiple-choice questions and open-ended fields to allow for elaboration (see Annex2). **Questions were formulated based on the meeting minutes from AKIS meetings reported by partners.**

Questions covered the following key themes:

1. Topics discussed with AKIS / AKIS CBs
2. Goals and drivers of cooperation
3. Identified barriers in collaboration
4. Future plans and aspirations for cooperation

NNFs were encouraged to provide narrative descriptions under the “Other – please specify” fields to enrich the qualitative dataset.

Respondents:

All 9 national partners represented by NNF of each country (Slovakia, Bulgaria, Germany, Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Austria, Hungary, and Poland) completed the survey. Responses were collected between April 8 and May 5, 2025.

Analysis Approach:

The collected survey data were exported and manually analyzed using qualitative content analysis methods.

Open-ended answers were reviewed to find common topics and ideas, which were grouped into key themes such as cooperation, barriers, and future plans. To reflect the variety of national experiences, a storytelling approach was used to describe each country’s situation (chapter 3). Some numbers were included to show general trends, but the main focus was on the detailed, real-life insights shared by the partners. Annex 1 represents the count of the AKIS meetings per partner country.

A. Current forms of cooperation based on questions 1 and 2

In the question 1 on current form of cooperation, the NNFs were able to select from these predefined options:

- Support for the establishment of EIP Operational Groups
- Identification of barriers in implementation of OGs proposals
- Role and development of advisory services





- Sharing and dissemination of good practices in sustainable soil management
- Raising awareness of climate-smart agriculture
- Cooperation on survey distribution (farmers, OGs)
- Involvement in National Node activities
- Engagement in AKIS-related events
- Contribution to or promotion of knowledge platforms
- Engagement in policy dialogue on soil and farm management
- Participation in or support of soil-related EU or national events
- Other, please specify

In the question 2 on current form of cooperation, the NNFs were able to select from these predefined options:

- Signed a letter of support confirming cooperation
- Promoting and disseminating Soil-X-Change outcomes
- Supporting data collection from stakeholders (OGs, farmers)
- Co-organizing events (field days, webinars, workshops)
- Linking Soil-X-Change with policy processes (e.g. strategic plans, rural development programs)
- Mapping OGs and soil-related projects
- Building a community of practice or national network on soil
- Connection through participation in national CAP or AKIS platforms
- Other, please specify

Based on the answers, it can be concluded that Soil-X-Change partners have been actively engaging AKIS and AKIS CBs through various initiatives. Key forms of cooperation include:

1. Knowledge dissemination and events

- Organization and co-organization of field days, webinars, and workshops (each partner country has organized at least one workshop in first half of the project).
- Dissemination of project outcomes, including promotion of the plans for Soil-X-Change dashboard.

2. Community building and policy dialogue

- Building national Communities of Practice on soil (reported by Austria, Bulgaria, Italy, Slovakia and Spain).
- Participation in AKIS-related events, NN activities, and national CAP platforms.
- Formal expressions of support (e.g., letters of cooperation).

3. Support for OGs

- Assisting in the establishment and mapping of OGs.

4. Data collection support





- Facilitating surveys and stakeholder engagement - farmers, OGs (Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Poland).

B. Barriers to cooperation

In the question on barriers to cooperation, the NNFs were able to select from these predefined options:

- Limited or unclear mandate of AKIS CB in the country
- Changes or instability in government or AKIS structures
- Lack of awareness or visibility of Soil-X-Change at national level
- Limited human resources or capacity within AKIS CB
- Fragmented or decentralized AKIS structure
- Other, please specify

Despite progress, several common barriers were reported:

1. Institutional challenges

- Limited or unclear mandates of AKIS CBs (reported by most NNFs – Austria, Bulgaria, Spain, Slovakia, Slovenia).
- Fragmented or decentralized AKIS structures (Austria, Germany, Spain).
- Institutional instability or changes within AKIS systems (notably in Slovakia).

2. Capacity constraints

- Lack of human resources and limited time availability among AKIS CBs (this barrier was reported by all countries except of Germany and Slovakia).

3. Engagement gaps

- Low responsiveness or limited interest from AKIS CBs (notably reported by Slovenia).

C. Visions for future cooperation

In the question on vision for future cooperation, the NNFs were able to select from these predefined options:

- Organizing joint webinars or workshops
- Promoting the Soil-X-Change dashboard or results database
- Cooperation on knowledge dissemination platforms
- Strengthening advisory service involvement in Soil-X-Change
- Developing policy recommendations on soil health and innovation
- Supporting upcoming OG calls and matchmaking
- Co-developing practical tools for farmers
- Integration of Soil-X-Change into national CAP network activities
- Establishing long-term cooperation mechanisms
- Other, please specify

Partners envision deepening and institutionalizing cooperation with AKIS through:





1. Continued dissemination and outreach

- Joint organization of knowledge exchange events.
- Continued promotion of Soil-X-Change tools and platforms.

2. Policy integration

- Development of policy recommendations on soil health and innovation.
- Support for future OG calls and matchmaking activities.

3. Sustainable institutional cooperation

- Establishment of long-term cooperation mechanisms.
- Integration of project results into national CAP and AKIS platforms.

While some visions remain aspirational due to limited current engagement, the ambition for more strategic, long-term cooperation is shared by all partners.

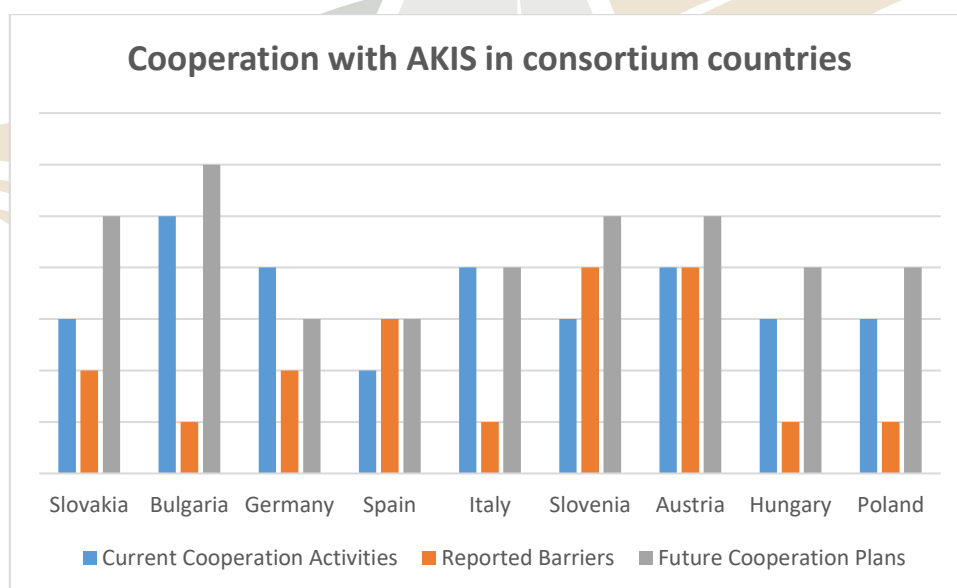


Figure 1 Cooperation with AKIS by partner country

Source: authors

Figure 1 illustrates the level of engagement with AKIS CBs across Soil-X-Change partner countries, reflecting both current cooperation, future ambitions, and the number of barriers encountered. The figure is based on data collected via a structured survey completed by NNFs, where respondents selected predefined cooperation activities, reported existing barriers, and outlined their intended future actions.

The Y-axis uses a scoring scale from 0 to 6, which corresponds to the number of selected items in each of the following categories:





Current cooperation activities - number of activities currently being carried out (e.g., survey support, joint events, OG mapping).

Reported barriers - number of distinct institutional or capacity-related challenges identified (e.g., unclear AKIS CB mandate, human resource limitations, fragmented systems).

Future cooperation plans - number of planned or envisioned actions to deepen AKIS collaboration (e.g., dashboard promotion, long-term mechanisms, policy development).

These values were not weighted, but provide a semi-quantitative interpretation of the state of AKIS cooperation in each partner country. The barriers reflect challenges rather than achievements and they were included in the table to help contextualize the cooperation scores and compare levels of ambition relative to institutional constraints. For example, Bulgaria and Italy reported both high current activity and ambitious plans, despite minor barriers, suggesting a well-established AKIS connection. Slovakia, Slovenia and Poland, in contrast, show a disparity between high future ambition and lower current engagement combined with multiple barriers. Slovenia highlights significant gaps between intention and actual AKIS involvement due to recurring institutional challenges.

3 Cooperation under the spotlight in individual countries

Austria

University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU), has actively engaged with the AKIS CB and the national CAP network through various channels including joint meetings, event planning, and knowledge-sharing initiatives. These efforts have included mapping OGs, distributing surveys, presenting the Soil-X-Change project at a dedicated webinar hosted by the Verein Bodenleben, and maintaining visibility through platforms such as "[modernAKIS](#)," "[EU-FarmBook](#)," and the national "[Zukunftsraum Land](#)" network. Despite these initiatives, BOKU reported to face structural and capacity-related challenges. The fragmented nature of AKIS governance and limited human resources make long-term coordination difficult. Nevertheless, cooperation with AKIS is evolving. Joint opportunities have been identified for Soil-X-Change integration in future newsletters (with up to 8000 recipients), OG databases, and national events such as "Speeding Up Innovation." The AKIS CB expressed willingness to include Soil-X-Change in relevant policy briefings and supported the idea of co-organizing events in 2026.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria stands out as one of the most engaged countries. The National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAAS) acts as a regional AKIS coordinator with strong involvement in policy dialogue both nationally and through [EUFRAS](#) and [SEASN](#). NAAS is a key participant in AKIS. Their 27 district offices and 28 municipal offices are regional coordinators of AKIS in the country. This makes them an active participant and essential linking intermediary in all activities not only of the national AKIS system, but also of the national coordination body. Their cooperation has included supporting survey distribution, mapping OGs, and promoting project results. The main challenge lies in limited human resources within AKIS CB, yet NAAS remains committed. Their vision includes broad integration of Soil-X-Change into national CAP network after it is in its full capacity to function, co-developing tools for farmers, and supporting future OG calls, thus a comprehensive approach toward embedding the project into Bulgarian agricultural policy.





Germany

The Leibniz Institute for Agricultural Engineering and Bioeconomy (ATB) established contact with the [German Networking Agency for Rural Areas](#) (DVS), which operates under the Federal Agency for Agriculture and Food (BLE) and serves as a key facilitator of knowledge exchange between administrative, scientific, and practical actors. While there is no officially designated AKIS CB in Germany, DVS representative agreed to act as the main contact point for Soil-X-Change and provide support comparable to that of an AKIS CB, including offering access to databases of EIP-AGRI OGs and dissemination channels for the farmer survey. This informal collaboration enabled ATB to align project activities with existing advisory and innovation frameworks, despite lacking centralized AKIS governance. Looking forward, ATB plans to strengthen stakeholder engagement platforms and align Soil-X-Change outcomes with national and EU-level soil and bioeconomy strategies, leveraging DVS's role to bridge project visibility with multi-level governance structures. The cooperation also included two national events. First event focused on knowledge exchange between AKIS stakeholders and EIP-AGRI projects, with a particular emphasis on robotics and smart farming technologies in agriculture. Second event facilitated discussions aimed at enhancing the integration of OGs into Horizon Europe projects and shaping future CAP programming.

Hungary

Hungary's cooperation with the Soil-X-Change project has developed through focused and constructive engagement between partner the Research Institute of Agricultural Economics (AKI) and the AKIS CB at the Ministry of Agriculture. The collaboration began with a joint session during the EJP SOIL workshop, where project goals were introduced, including the establishment of NN and improved networking among soil-focused OGs. This was followed by a bilateral online meeting in June 2024 that outlined concrete steps forward. The AKIS CB expressed support through the promotion of Soil-X-Change surveys, sharing a national database of OGs, and endorsing the project with a formal letter of support. Both parties acknowledged the value of joint activities, especially in light of AKI's new role as the Innovation and Digitalisation Support Unit within the Hungarian CAP network. This is expected to ease integration into national platforms. While human resource constraints within the AKIS CB remain a limiting factor, Hungary's strategy is clearly shifting from initial engagement toward systemic integration. Planned actions include field visits, community-building events, and co-development of policy recommendations on soil health ensuring that the project's outputs resonate within broader advisory and innovation structures. Furthermore, the international event [Budapest Soil Health Forum](#) was organized with the active support of Hungarian AKIS CB (more information about this event is presented in Deliverable 2.4 Updated report on National Nodes and Soil-X-Change Net establishment and management).

Italy

Italy's cooperation within the Soil-X-Change project has been characterized by strong engagement in outreach, data collection, and knowledge sharing. The University of Sassari (UNISS) has closely collaborated with the AKIS CB (MASAF – Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests) to conduct surveys, co-organize stakeholder events, and support the mapping of OGs focused on soil health. While limited human capacity within the AKIS CB has posed a challenge, the commitment from MASAF is formal and proactive. In a signed letter of support, the Director General emphasized the Ministry's full endorsement of Soil-X-Change, recognizing its alignment with national AKIS objectives under the 2023–2027 CAP Strategic Plan. Looking ahead, Italy envisions continued collaboration on knowledge platforms, policy contribution, and institutional





capacity-building to ensure that Soil-X-Change results are widely disseminated and embedded within national rural development frameworks.

Poland

Poland shows a steady commitment to integrate Soil-X-Change into its national agricultural innovation framework, with project partner the Centre for Agricultural Advisory Services (CDR) leading stakeholder engagement and good practice collection. Despite limited resources at the AKIS CB level, CDR has maintained strong momentum in aligning the project with CAP implementation efforts. This collaboration was formally proved by signed letter of support by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, which recognized the Soil-X-Change project as a valuable contributor to the AKIS system under Poland's 2023–2027 CAP Strategic Plan. In a letter of support, the Ministry emphasized the importance of knowledge transfer and the role of CDR in disseminating innovative solutions and practices identified through the project. As a key institution managing thematic networks and demonstration farms, CDR's involvement is seen as essential for translating project outputs into advisory services and rural innovation. Looking forward, CDR plans to intensify efforts in OG matchmaking, promote project results via the Soil-X-Change dashboard, and incorporate findings into knowledge transfer activities demonstrating a clear intent to mainstream soil health innovations across the national AKIS landscape.

Slovakia

In Slovakia, Bioeconomy Cluster (BEC) has focused on building a community of practice around soil health. Through meetings with the AKIS CB, including the general director of Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Institute (IZPI), BEC has consistently emphasized the need to reactivate and evaluate the OG proposals that were submitted but never financed in Slovakia. These efforts are supported by signed support letter from the AKIS CB and by joint advocacy initiatives to engage the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in recognizing the innovation potential of OGs as multi-actor tools. In addition, BEC has co-organized field events and awareness activities with AKIS stakeholders, such as the Day of Living Soil, to promote soil health and regenerative agriculture. While challenges persist particularly due to institutional instability and a limited AKIS CB mandate, Slovakia envisions future cooperation focused on promoting the Soil-X-Change dashboard, developing policy recommendations, and establishing long-term collaboration mechanisms rooted in stronger AKIS engagement.

Slovenia

Slovenia's experience with AKIS engagement illustrates both promising developments and ongoing challenges. The Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia (KGZS) has taken a proactive role in establishing cooperation with the national AKIS CB under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food. Following initial outreach via phone and email, a formal online meeting was held with high-level representatives from AKIS, the Rural Network, and relevant departments. During the meeting, the Soil-X-Change project was presented in detail, and both sides explored opportunities for collaboration, including knowledge exchange, participation in events, and visibility via the [modernAKIS platform](#). While the meeting confirmed mutual interest and a letter of support was acknowledged, operational barriers remain. These include limited continuity of engagement, staff constraints, and a fragmented institutional environment. Nevertheless, KGZS remains committed to deepening collaboration by promoting matchmaking among EIP OGs, enhancing the visibility of soil-related innovations, and integrating project outputs into CAP-related networks and platforms. The establishment of a sustainable National Node is seen as a key pathway toward long-term knowledge exchange and stronger AKIS integration.





Spain

Spain has engaged AKIS through advisory service development and good practice dissemination. Their focus has been on building a soil-related community of practice and participating in National Node activities. While operational engagement has faced challenges such as a fragmented AKIS structure, limited resources, and an evolving institutional mandate, the strategic commitment from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is evident. In a formal letter of support, the Head of the Unit for Innovation and Digitalisation confirmed alignment of Soil-X-Change with Spain's AKIS priorities under its 2023–2027 CAP Strategic Plan. The Ministry expressed its intention to cooperate on dissemination and knowledge sharing, recognizing the project's potential to improve soil health practices and innovation adoption across the country. Spain sees the future in long-term mechanisms including knowledge exchange and dashboard promotion to embed Soil-X-Change outcomes into broader national discussions.

4 Agreed actions and outlook for the second half of the project

In the second half of the project, the focus will shift toward the practical implementation of the cooperation agreements established with AKIS CBs and CAP Networks. Each NN will intensify its collaboration through at least two structured meetings with AKIS representatives, the joint organisation of national or regional events involving AKIS stakeholders, and active contributions to the development of policy recommendations and validation of the Soil-X-Change dashboard within WP3 and WP4. These coordinated efforts represent a clear transition from initial engagement to concrete implementation. They will help ensure that AKIS CBs evolve from being information multipliers into active partners in disseminating, validating, and mainstreaming Soil-X-Change results within national advisory services and CAP structures across Europe.

The actions below were discussed during bilateral meetings of partners with AKIS Coordination Bodies (CBs) and CAP Networks between May and July 2025:

1. Austria

Agreed actions:

- Future Soil-X-Change updates and materials from the Austrian NN will be disseminated through AKIS and CAP Network channels.
- AKIS CB representatives will promote OG results (PhosVer, Market Gardening) and link them to Soil-X-Change communication tools and the dashboard.

Limitations:

- The Austrian AKIS structure functions differently from other countries; thus, cooperation will focus mainly on dissemination rather than policy or advisory alignment.
- Continued support is needed from the project to supply concise, multilingual materials suitable for AKIS channels.





2. Bulgaria

Agreed actions:

- Joint activities planned for November 2025, including participation of AKIS CB representatives in the national webinar (10 November) and a national training seminar for advisors (11–13 November).
- AKIS CB will provide advisory support, publish project results on the AKIS platform, and ensure NN participation in CAP Network workshops.

Limitations:

- Limited availability of farmers to attend events or demonstrations.
- Bulgaria's NN remains fully embedded in the national AKIS system and contributes directly to national objectives (creation of 25 OGs on soil health).

3. Germany

Agreed actions:

- Workshop at DLG Feldtage 2026, focusing on soil innovation.
- Webinar on the finalised Soil-X-Change dashboard and thematic data presentation.
- Continued dissemination support from the AKIS CB, including participation in events after the transition of German AKIS to a more integrated structure in 2026.

Limitations:

- The German AKIS framework remains thematically broad; Soil-X-Change can contribute by focusing on soil-related topics.
- Additional feedback from OGs is needed to guide AKIS priorities on soil management.

4. Hungary

Agreed actions:

- AKIS CB to share the national OG database and promote project surveys.
- Regular bilateral meetings and short communication briefs to sustain cooperation.

Limitations:

- Limited availability for frequent personal meetings.
- Need for concise, easily shareable materials for policy audiences.





5. Italy

Agreed actions:

- MASAF (AKIS CB) will circulate Soil-X-Change outputs (dashboard updates, factsheets, PA highlights) through CAP/AKIS newsletters, web pages and training calendars, with Council for Agricultural Research and Analysis of Agricultural Economics (CREA) acting as the technical conduit where relevant.
- UNISS, MASAF and CREA to co-host a practice-to-advisory workshop on integrating Soil-X-Change results into advisory training and OG proposal guidance, leveraging INNOVARURALE/EIP-AGRI events for reach.
- AKIS CB/CREA to share regional OG lists for soil-related topics and help identify 2–3 OGs per region to pilot (i) dashboard testing, and (ii) validation/adaptation of practices (e.g., cover crops, soil amendments, organic matter increase) with Knowledge Board feedback loops.
- Co-draft short policy notes (with MASAF) on simplification of OG procedures and incentives for soil-health practices (cover crops/green manures, organic amendments), feeding national CAP SP discussions and AKIS training content.

Limitations:

- Capacity constraints at the AKIS CB (limited staff/time) and regional fragmentation may slow co-organisation. This can be mitigated by concise Italian-language communication packs (1–2-page briefs, slide decks) and early scheduling.
- Administrative lead times for ministerial endorsements. This can be mitigated by routing technical dissemination through CREA channels while formal notices progress.

6. Poland

Agreed actions:

- Joint event for all soil-related Horizon Europe projects in 2026 (under discussion with the CAP Network and AKIS CB).
- Ongoing dissemination support from the Polish CAP Network, including online promotion of the upcoming dashboard.

Limitations:

- Ministry department acting as AKIS CB is overloaded with tasks and cannot yet co-organise events.
- Need for clear scheduling and coordination support from the project to secure future engagement.





7. Slovakia

Agreed actions:

- Joint policy dialogue with the IZPI (AKIS CB) and the Ministry of Agriculture on the reactivation of previously unfinanced OG proposals.
- Promotion of the Soil-X-Change dashboard within the Slovak AKIS framework.
- Preparation of national policy recommendations on soil health and regenerative practices in cooperation with the IZPI.

Limitations:

- Institutional instability and limited AKIS mandate.
- Need for regular coordination meetings to maintain continuity of cooperation.

8. Slovenia

Agreed actions:

- Regular coordination meetings with the AKIS CB and CAP Network.
- Participation in national soil-focused events such as the EIP Event.
- Joint workshops, webinars, and panel discussions to promote adoption of soil-friendly practices.
- AKIS CB to share EIP project lists and communication channels to strengthen the Soil-X-Change network.

Limitations:

- AKIS staff availability remains limited; cooperation often depends on ad-hoc alignment of schedules.
- The next step will be for AKIS CB to invite Soil-X-Change to events they organise, ensuring balanced reciprocity.

9. Spain

Agreed actions:

- Dissemination of materials from the National Soil Health Meeting through AKIS, CAP, and EU-FarmBook channels.
- Co-organisation of joint webinars and field days on nutrient management, erosion control, and carbon monitoring.
- Development of a Spanish Soil Thematic Network with MAPA and UCO to strengthen policy dialogue and practice validation.





- Use of the ROPO advisory network (>1,000 consultants) for widespread result dissemination.

Limitations:

- Persistent institutional fragmentation and limited coordination capacity.
- To mitigate this, AKIS and CAP networks will implement standardised communication packages and event co-organisation templates.

Conclusion

The first half of the Soil-X-Change project demonstrated promising and diverse efforts to engage with AKIS systems across 9 countries of Soil-X-Change project. Despite varying institutional structures and levels of responsiveness, all project partners have succeeded in initiating meaningful dialogues with their national AKIS CBs, laying a foundation for long-term collaboration. These efforts have already led to concrete outcomes such as letters of support, survey dissemination, co-organization of events, and inclusion of Soil-X-Change in national knowledge platforms. To fully unlock the transformative potential of this engagement, institutional and capacity barriers must be addressed. Fragmented governance, unclear mandates, and resource limitations continue to hinder the depth and continuity of cooperation in several countries. Strengthening AKIS connections is not only vital for project visibility, it is central to achieving Soil-X-Change's mission of fostering cross-border knowledge exchange and co-creation for sustainable soil and farm management. AKIS CBs act as critical multipliers within national systems, bridging research, practice, and policy. Their active involvement is essential for dissemination of project results into advisory services, CAP networks, and innovation ecosystems. As the project enters its second half, further integration with AKIS will be key to ensuring that Soil-X-Change outcomes are not only shared, but adopted, transforming insights into practice, and networks into lasting impact.





Annex 1

Annex1: Count of AKIS CBs meetings in first half of the project

Country	AKIS meetings
Austria	30.9.2024
	11.3.2025
Bulgaria	30.5.2024
	8.9.2024
	6.11.2024
	18.2.2025
	13.6.2025
Germany	5.4.2024
Hungary	28.2.2024
	20.6.2024
Italy	23.9.2024
Poland	2.10.2024
	23.4.2025
Slovakia	19.3.2024
	10.7.2024
	11.9.2024
	28.3.2025
Slovenia	6.9.2024
Spain	11.2.2025





Annex 2

Annex2: Survey

Soil-X-Change AKIS cooperation

Dear National Node Facilitator,

thank you for taking the time to fill out this short questionnaire. The aim is to collect insights on your cooperation with AKIS or AKIS Coordination Bodies (CB) within the Soil-X-Change project. Your input will help us better understand the current state of collaboration, identify good practices, challenges, and future opportunities. **Your insights are crucial for the elaboration of Deliverable D2.9: Outcome report of events organized with AKISs in the first half of the project.**

Your responses will contribute to a better understanding of AKIS engagement and help to shape effective policy recommendations as we move forward with the project.

Project country*

Austria

Bulgaria

Hungary

Germany

Italy

Poland

Spain

Slovakia

Slovenia

1. What were the main topics you were discussing with AKIS / AKIS CB in relation to the Soil-X-Change project so far?*

You can select multiple answers

1. Support for the establishment of EIP Operational Groups
2. Identification of barriers in implementation of OGs proposals
3. Role and development of advisory services
4. Sharing and dissemination of good practices in sustainable soil management
5. Raising awareness of climate-smart agriculture
6. Cooperation on survey distribution (farmers, OGs)
7. Involvement in National Node activities
8. Engagement in AKIS-related events





9. Contribution to or promotion of knowledge platforms
10. Engagement in policy dialogue on soil and farm management
11. Participation in or support of soil-related EU or national events
12. Other, please specify

Other:

If you selected option "Other" please specify

2. What were the goals and drivers of your cooperation during the first year of the project? *

You can select multiple answers

1. Signed a letter of support confirming cooperation
2. Promoting and disseminating Soil-X-Change outcomes
3. Supporting data collection from stakeholders (OGs, farmers)
4. Co-organizing events (field days, webinars, workshops)
5. Linking Soil-X-Change with policy processes (e.g. strategic plans, rural development programs)
6. Mapping OGs and soil-related projects
7. Building a community of practice or national network on soil
8. Connection through participation in national CAP or AKIS platforms
9. Other, please specify

Other:

If you selected option "Other" please specify

3. What do you see as the main barriers in your collaboration with AKIS / AKIS CB? *

You can select multiple answers

1. Limited or unclear mandate of AKIS CB in the country
2. Changes or instability in government or AKIS structures
3. Lack of awareness or visibility of Soil-X-Change at national level
4. Limited human resources or capacity within AKIS CB
5. Fragmented or decentralized AKIS structure
6. Other, please specify

Other:

If you selected option "Other" please specify

4. What are your future plans for cooperation with AKIS? *

You can select multiple answers

5. Organizing joint webinars or workshops
6. Promoting the Soil-X-Change dashboard or results database





7. Cooperation on knowledge dissemination platforms
8. Strengthening advisory service involvement in Soil-X-Change
9. Developing policy recommendations on soil health and innovation
10. Supporting upcoming OG calls and matchmaking
11. Co-developing practical tools for farmers
12. Integration of Soil-X-Change into national CAP network activities
13. Establishing long-term cooperation mechanisms
14. Other, please specify

Other:

If you selected option "Other" please specify

