



Deliverable 7.5 - PIPs dynamic action plan



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Abstract:	This deliverable outlines the dynamic action plan for engaging with relevant Projects, Initiatives, and Platforms (PIPs) within the STEP UP project, aimed at fostering meaningful collaboration and amplifying the impact of project outcomes. Developed under Work Package 7, specifically Task 7.4, the plan provides a structured framework for identifying, assessing, and maintaining synergies with key actors across the livestock and agri-food innovation ecosystem. The action plan supports STEP UP's wider objectives by facilitating knowledge exchange, aligning methodologies, broadening stakeholder engagement, and enhancing policy relevance. It details the process of creating and maintaining a living inventory of PIPs, the methodology for determining strategic collaboration opportunities, and the mechanisms for managing and tracking interactions. Early outcomes include active engagements with EU-level platforms, initiation of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), and mapping of relevant PIPs. These activities have already contributed to validating project methods, expanding the network, and preparing the ground for long-term exploitation. This deliverable sets the foundation for ongoing and future synergies, which will evolve through WP8 and WP9 to ensure STEP UP's outputs are embedded within broader innovation and policy frameworks across Europe and internationally.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	
PIP	Projects, Initiatives and Platforms
ELPS	European Livestock Production Systems
ILPS	Innovative Livestock Production Systems
FAO	The Food and Agriculture Organisation
ATF	The Animal Task Force
GASL	Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock
OHI	One Health Initiative
LEAP	Livestock Environmental Assessment and Performance Partnership
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
AKIS	Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems
EAAP	European Association of Animal Production
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding

Table 1: List of abbreviations and acronyms

1. Executive Summary

1.1. Overview

The STEP UP project aims to advance innovative livestock production systems that are both environmentally sustainable and socially responsible. This deliverable outlines a dynamic action plan for engaging with relevant Projects, Initiatives, and Platforms (PIPs) to foster collaboration across the livestock sector. This deliverable is associated with WP7 Establishing DEC processes, materials & channels and launching the cross-functional MAAS. The primary aim of Task 7.4. and consequently this deliverable is to identify and analyse the broader ecosystem surrounding the project, which will assist in sharing data, knowledge, and tools while coordinating and initiating activities with flagship initiatives, projects, and other relevant ventures. The proposed plan in this document not only identifies strategic areas and opportunities for infiltration but also sets out a structured approach for engagement throughout the project's duration. Collaboration will be pursued with relevant H2020, Horizon Europe and other R&I projects, as well as AKIS actors and other initiatives and platforms at European, national and regional levels to ensure effective knowledge exchange and complementarity of efforts.

1.2. Document Scope

This deliverable defines the dynamic action plan for engaging with external Projects, Initiatives and Platforms (PIPs) within the STEP UP project. It sets out the strategic framework for identifying relevant PIPs, initiating and sustaining collaboration, and generating added value through joint activities. The document covers the selection and prioritisation criteria for PIPs, outlines various collaboration models, and describes coordination mechanisms both within the consortium and with external actors. It also addresses communication and dissemination strategies aimed at ensuring visibility and relevance among diverse audiences, including researchers, policymakers and other relevant stakeholders. In addition, it details the monitoring and reporting processes designed to track progress, assess impact and inform stakeholders. While this deliverable presents the overall engagement framework, specific documentation of individual PIP collaborations and technical outputs will be included in future deliverables and updated project reports.

1.3. Document Structure

The document is structured into eight main sections.

Chapter 1- An overview of the project is provided, along with an outline of the document's scope and an introduction to its structure.

Chapter 2- Describes the project's aims and objectives, the role of Work Package 7, the purpose of the action plan, and the definition and classification of PIPs.

Chapter 3- Details the identification and mapping process of relevant PIPs, including related projects, other relevant initiatives, and platforms, as well as their thematic relevance and engagement potential.

Chapter 4- Outlines the process for selecting PIPs, establishing contact, determining collaboration types, planning joint activities (e.g., webinars, workshops), and managing public communication.

Chapter 5- Explains how interactions and collaborations with PIPs will be tracked, assessed, and reported, including examples of early activities and partnerships.

Chapter 6- Summarises the achievements and early benefits from the established collaborations and outlines their contribution to the broader goals of the project.

Chapter 7- Describe the next steps and actions for establishing new and improving existing collaborations.

Chapter 8- concludes this deliverable, summarising key findings and insights.

2. Introduction

2.1. Project aims and objectives

The STEP UP project aims to generate a robust, evidence-based understanding of livestock production systems (ELPS and ILPS) across Europe, with a strong emphasis on sustainability, resilience and regional specificity. By compiling and analysing existing knowledge and identifying innovation entry points tailored to diverse regional conditions, such as market context, regulations, bioclimatic features and cultural aspects, STEP UP seeks to support the transformation of terrestrial livestock production systems. Through a comprehensive literature review, in-depth case studies and engagement with innovative livestock systems, the rigorous life cycle assessments and econometric modelling, the project will map the environmental, economic and social impacts and externalities across main livestock systems. These findings will feed into a centralised database, supporting the development of future scenarios and guiding sustainable transformation through evidence-based recommendations.

In addition to scientific analysis, STEP UP places strong emphasis on multi-actor engagement, co-creation and stakeholder involvement. By integrating scientific evidence, participatory methods and strategic communication, STEP UP aims to contribute to a fairer, healthier and more resource-efficient food system across Europe and beyond.

2.2. Work Package 7 PIP Network

Work Package 7- Establishing DEC processes, materials & channels and launching the cross-functional MAAS, plays a fundamental role in shaping the communication, dissemination, exploitation and engagement strategy of the STEP UP project. The overall objective of WP7 is to define, initiate and operationalise effective DEC processes and to ensure consistent stakeholder engagement across relevant ecosystems.

Task 7.4- Establish synergetic links with relevant PIPs under the umbrella of the sustainable livestock integration, which directly informs this deliverable, is dedicated to managing and expanding a robust and strategic network of external stakeholders, especially Projects, Initiatives and Platforms (PIPs). The purpose of this task is to identify, initiate and manage collaborations with key European and international initiatives (such as EPI-AGRI, EU CAP Network, FAO, FarmBook, GASL, ATF and others) that share STEP UP's vision of sustainable livestock production. By fostering these strategic links, the project aims to broaden its network, support reciprocal knowledge exchange, align activities with relevant policy platforms and enhance the adoption and impact of project results.

The scope of this task extends also to other relevant projects (H2020, Horizon Europe and other R&I projects), as well as AKIS actors, and it serves as a crucial enabler for cross-project learning and positioning STEP UP within the broader R&I landscape. Synergies developed through this Task will contribute to data sharing, operational alignment and stakeholder mobilisation that are essential to achieve STEP UP objectives related to sustainability, resilience and food systems transformation.

This deliverable is connected to Task 7.4 as it outlines the dynamic action plan for engaging with identified PIPs. It is a necessary step ensuring that the approach is strategically coordinated and continuously evaluated for relevance and effectiveness throughout the project. The engagement process is structured in three key stages across the project timeline:

Stage 1 (Month 1-18): Under WP7, Task 7.4 will focus on establishing initial synergies and designing the foundational network structure;

Stage 2 (Month 19- 36): Under WP8, Task 8.4 will focus on maintaining these established connections, integrating external input into ongoing project work, and ensuring continuous bilateral exchanges;

Stage 3 (Month 37- 48): Under WP9, Task 9.4 will further expand and solidify the network, incorporating final project findings and outputs into broader dissemination and exploitation activities, thus maximising long-term impact.

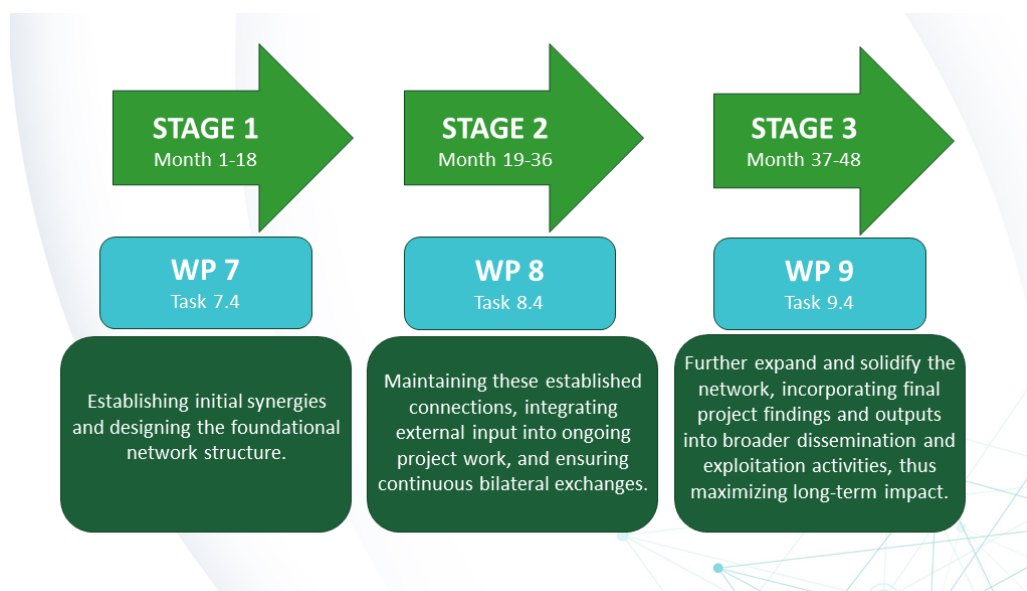


Figure 1: Stages of PIPs Action Plan

2.3. Purpose of PIPs Action Plan

The purpose of this PIPs Action Plan is to **provide a structured and strategic framework for engaging with Projects, Initiatives, and Platforms (PIPs)** along with other relevant avenues of collaboration throughout the duration of the STEP UP project. Conceived as a dynamic and adaptable strategy, the Action Plan will be regularly updated through meetings and internal reports as well as formally through linked deliverables in WP 8 and WP9, to reflect evolving priorities and emerging opportunities, ensuring that STEP UP remains responsive, collaborative, and aligned with key developments across the livestock sector.

This document sets out a roadmap for fostering synergies with selected PIPs, offering clear guidance on engagement mechanisms, types of collaborative actions, and expected outcomes not only for the purpose of project coordination but also to allow partners to take full advantage of such a plan. While the coordination of these activities is led by Work Package 7, the plan is designed to support and involve all STEP UP work packages (WP1–WP6), recognising that relevant synergies may emerge across a range of thematic areas. Through the exchange of information and knowledge, work packages can complement research and present their results to a wider audience, as well as more easily reach the intended stakeholders. By streamlining cooperation, avoiding duplication, and enhancing the dissemination and uptake of project innovations, this Action Plan serves as a practical reference for consortium partners working to expand the reach and impact of STEP UP.

2.4. PIPs definition and Classification

In the context of the European Commission, **Projects, Initiatives, and Platforms (PIPs)** can be referred to as distinct yet interconnected concepts that help define the framework and actions within the EU's broader strategy for development, innovation, and policy implementation. In the STEP UP context, PIPs can be defined and understood as external organisations, aggregations, or consortia that work on specific thematic areas such as livestock sustainability, agricultural innovation, rural policy, rural development, animal welfare, or food systems transformation, and sustainable food production or other related sectors. These entities collaborate to implement EU-driven strategies and contribute to the broader EU policy goals, aligning with the objectives of various EU targets and supporting the delivery of results through coordinated actions.

In essence, PIPs serve as a collective framework of action, where, within the STEP UP project, we can see **initiatives providing the direction, projects carrying out the actions, and platforms enabling cooperation** to ensure the successful implementation of EC goals.

There are 3 broader categories for interaction in STEP UP's PIPs broader network: Projects, Initiatives and Platforms.

- **Projects:** Are defined as specific, time-bound effort that aims to achieve concrete results in a particular area. The STEP UP project aims to scout and collaborate with relevant research or innovation activities, typically funded by the EU (or nationally), that address specific challenges related to sustainable livestock systems. These may include Horizon projects (H2020 and HE) or other R&I projects aligned with STEP UP's objectives. **Collaborative** in nature, often involving multiple stakeholders, including national governments, private companies, universities, and NGOs key for achieving a wider impact for the STEP UP project.
- **Initiatives:** Refer to broader organised efforts or strategic actions that usually address a larger or long-term goal, often policy or mission-driven, that promote systemic change or knowledge exchange around topics. Initiatives are often driven by the European Commission or other EU institutions and tend to involve a combination of joint actions. In the context of STEP UP themes under rural development, animal welfare or food systems transformation, addressing societal challenges of sustainable food production is of importance. For STEP UP a policy-driven initiatives are also of importance as they aim to improve cooperation across member states and regions. They might be led by public bodies, NGOs or cross-sector coalitions.
- **Platforms:** Structured networks, digital environment, or stakeholder forums that facilitate knowledge sharing, coordination, and capacity building across actors in the livestock and agri-food sectors. Platforms can be used to connect stakeholders across Europe (e.g., governments, researchers, businesses, and civil society) to work together on common goals. They often enable the sharing of resources, data, and tools that support specific objectives. In the context of STEP UP, platforms serve as strategic enablers for dissemination, stakeholder engagement, and cross-sectoral collaboration, supporting the project's goals of increasing the visibility and uptake of sustainable livestock practices. By engaging with relevant platforms, such as FarmBook, the EU CAP Network, STEP UP can contribute to and benefit from established mechanisms for knowledge exchange, policy dialogue, and innovation scaling.

3. Inventory of relevant Projects, Initiatives and Platforms

3.1. Pre-scan of relevant PIPs

One of the initial tasks under this work package was **the pre-screening and development of a comprehensive inventory** of relevant Projects, Initiatives, and Platforms (PIPs) at European, international, national, and regional levels. This activity began during the proposal preparation phase, when key projects and networks were initially identified and mapped based on their thematic relevance, policy alignment, and potential for synergy with STEP UP's objectives. The preliminary list, presented in the Grant Agreement, served as a starting point for more detailed screening following project initiation. The pre-screening process involved a **desk-based review** of Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe project databases, major EU networks (such as EIP-AGRI, CAP Network, and FarmBook), and strategic initiatives referenced by partners, as well as scanning national and international programmes aligned with sustainable livestock production, food systems transformation, and environmental performance.

Following the project's launch, this pre-screening was refined and expanded through a structured desk-based review, which involved cross-referencing relevant databases (e.g. CORDIS), internal consortium expertise, and existing internal thematic networks. Each consortium partner was invited to contribute suggestions based on their institutional links and national knowledge. The resulting list of PIPs was collated, categorised by thematic relevance (e.g. environmental impact, animal welfare, data platforms, advisory services), and stored in a shared Google Drive repository, accessible to all project partners.

The inventory functions as a living resource and will be regularly updated throughout the project. A dedicated PIPs database has been established and is maintained by FSH, with co-development responsibilities shared across the STEP UP consortium. This tool is critical for tracking engagement opportunities, facilitating knowledge exchange, coordinating dissemination activities, and ensuring STEP UP remains responsive to the evolving research, innovation, and policy environment related to sustainable livestock systems. The table below showcases some of the closely aligned projects determined in the Grant Agreement of the STEP UP project.

Project Name	Partner	Relevance
H2020 PATHWAYS	SLU (coord.), WR, CSIC, IDELE, ITAVI, IFIP	Identification and development of sustainable practices along the supply chain, Provision of Case studies, provision of indicators, methods to evaluate systems and provision of scenarios.
HE Re-Livestock	CSIC (coord.), WR, SLU, PULS	Provision of a Case study and provision of a solution to reduce GHG emissions of livestock farming and to increase the capacity for dealing with climate change impacts.
HE FOODCoST	WR (coord.), INRAE, SLU	Provision of tools and guidance to policymakers, businesses and other actors to assess the impacts fostered by the implementation of business and policy measures.
HE VALPRO Path	Teagasc (coord.), FSH, CSIC	Best practice sharing on comprehensive and holistic production systems analysis, while utilising life cycle sustainability assessment (LCSA).
HE BrightSpace	WR (coord.), Thuenen, INRAE	Provision of effective and sustainable strategies to navigate within a safe and just operating space.
HE RefreSCAR	Teagasc (coord.), FSH, BLE, WR, CSIC	Translational program support among the value chain participants, including SCAR experts and groups.

Table 2: Closely aligned projects

3.2. Mapping of relevant PIPs

To ensure that the PIPs included in the inventory are directly relevant to the objectives and scope of STEP UP, **the mapping process was carried out using a dual approach**. First, a desk-based review was conducted by the WP7 leads (FSH), focusing on identifying relevant projects, initiatives, and platforms through a systematic analysis of EU databases (CORDIS), thematic networks, and related literature. This ensured a broad and structured foundation for the inventory.

Second, FSH developed and distributed a targeted survey to gather input from other Work Package leaders and consortium members. The survey was first introduced and circulated during the General Assembly held in February 2025 in Novi Sad, and was subsequently shared via email. Its purpose was to identify specific PIPs that individual partners considered valuable for knowledge exchange or methodological alignment, as well as those that could support or benefit from synergies with their respective WP activities.

The survey responses were used to refine the initial inventory by highlighting thematically or methodologically aligned PIPs that could support the development of project outputs and strengthen STEP UP's integration within the wider research and innovation landscape. To ensure the inventory remains current and reflective of new opportunities, the survey will continue to be used periodically throughout the project, allowing consortium members to report new connections and suggest emerging collaborations.

In this inventory, we determine closely aligned projects, other relevant projects, relevant initiatives and relevant platforms.



Figure 2: Survey results from General Assembly on synergies

Synergies for STEP UP

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Name of Synergy Contact	Type of Contact	Contact point	Approved by coordinator	1st contact	MoU/Lol Signed	Notes	Duration
Dyot4Life	Project	dcenejac@foodscalehub.com	Yes	27.12. 2024. MoU poslat Dukiju		MoU sent	01.04.2024. - 30.08.2028.
Valpro Path	Project	dcenejac@foodscalehub.com	Yes	27.12. 2024. MoU poslat Dukiju		MoU sent	01.09.2022. - 31.08.2026.
BrightSpace	Project	viktoriya.sturm@thuenen.de	Yes	25 July 2024 first meeting		Doesnt want MoU, just informal collaboration this agreement shall end on 31 December 2026.	01.11.2022. - 31.10.2027
Veterinarski institut Novi Sad	Research Insti...	markopajic@niv.ns.ac.rs	Yes	01.06.2024. potpisan MoU	MoU		
Wikifarmer	Platform	stella@wikifarmer.com	Yes	2.august 2024		MoU and suggested topic sent	
Re-Livestock	Project		Yes			MoU sent	01.09.2022. - 31.08.2027.
Pathways	Project	laurence.smith@slu.se	Yes	07/05/2025		MoU sent	
NUTRITIVE	Project		Yes			Consortium partners	01.06.2024. - 01.05.2028.
HoloRuminant	Project		Yes			Consortium partners	01.10.2021. - 30.09.2026.
INTAQIT	Project					Consortium partners	01.06.2021. - 31.05.2026.
Clima Pannonia	Project	velimir.mladenov@polj.edu.rs	Yes	17.may 2025		EU project _PoljF- MoU in preparation	01.03.2025. - 28.02.2029.
Animal Task Force	Initiative	ana.santos@animaltaskforce.eu	Yes	GA			
Verified Market Reports	Platform						
TEDY	Project	ana.santos@animaltaskforce.eu				Consortium partners - Feedinov	May 2025-2028
Low-Carbon Agriculture and Soil Health Improvement Program	Project					WORLD BANK - China	2025. - 2030.
Livestock and Agriculture Modernization Project (LAMP)	Project					WORLD BANK- Niger	2024. - 28.09.2029.
Promoting Sustainable Livestock Management And Ecosystem Conservation in Northern Ukraine	Project		Yes			United Nations	01.07.2021. - 31.12.2026.
LiveNet	Project					EU project	01.01.2025. - 31.12.2029.

Figure 3: Table in shared repository where potential collaborations are mapped and monitored

3.2.1. Closely aligned projects

STEP UP will actively collaborate with a set of closely aligned projects determined in the Grant Agreement to maximise knowledge exchange, avoid duplication, and strengthen the overall impact of EU-funded research in the livestock sector. Notably, projects such as **PATHWAYS**, **Re-Livestock**, and **FOODCoST**, coordinated or co-partnered by STEP UP consortium members, exhibit strong thematic overlap and complementary methodologies.

These projects offer valuable insights on sustainability metrics, policy frameworks, and stakeholder engagement approaches that STEP UP can build upon. Existing relationships with project coordinators and partners will facilitate efficient coordination of joint activities, including data sharing, cross-referencing case studies, and co-hosted dissemination events. This collaboration ensures that STEP UP remains embedded within a broader ecosystem of innovation, amplifying its relevance and reach across Europe.

3.2.2. Other relevant projects

In addition to direct collaboration with closely aligned projects, STEP UP will draw on the outcomes and methodologies of other thematically relevant **projects that align with its core objectives and scope of work**.

These include initiatives focused on sustainable food systems, climate-smart agriculture, animal welfare and environmental externalities, areas central to the STEP UP mission. Some of these projects have developed valuable tools, frameworks and stakeholder engagement models that can inform various aspects of STEP UP, from data integration to policy recommendations.

While these projects may not involve STEP UP partners directly, their outputs are highly relevant and may help STEP UP to ensure consistency with current best practices and to broaden the knowledge base that informs STEP UP outcomes.

Project Name	More about	Relevance
Digi4Live	https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101134866	Innovations in the livestock sector.
NUTRITIVE	https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101135400	This initiative promises to provide policymakers with vital insights for future European agricultural policies.
HoloRuminant	https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101000213	The ultimate goal is to characterise and identify ruminant-associated microbiomes associated with improved production efficiency, health and welfare.
FarmBioNet	https://farmbionet.eu/	The project aims to enhance Biodiversity-Friendly Farming practices in Europe by stimulating knowledge exchange between farmers, foresters, researchers, advisors, and other key stakeholders.
LiveNet	https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101182590	Sustainable livestock farming plays a crucial role in this, but it faces challenges such as changing climate conditions and the need for efficient practices.
PASTINNOVA	https://pastinnova.eu/	The key objective of PASTINNOVA is to reinforce the sustainability, profitability and resilience of small pastoral farms - Farm2Fork Approaches
Clima Pannonia	https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101156281	The project aims to promote the adoption of climate-neutral solutions across agricultural subsectors.

Table 3: Relevant projects for STEP UP as identified via desk research and consortium feedback

3.2.3. Relevant initiatives

STEP UP will strategically engage with key European and international initiatives that offer long-term vision, cross-sectoral coordination and strong policy orientation in areas aligned with sustainable livestock production. By aligning its outputs and communication efforts with the priorities and platforms of these initiatives, STEP UP will enhance the visibility of its findings, particularly in relation to livestock production, animal health and welfare and food system sustainability. Participation in such initiatives also allows STEP UP to contribute to data-driven approaches and strategies such as Farm2Fork and the Green Deal.

Some of the initiatives that might be interesting and relevant for STEP UP are represented in Table 4:

Initiative Name	Relevance
Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)	FAO provides a global platform for advancing sustainable agricultural practices and policy development, making it a key partner for STEP UP in aligning project outputs with international sustainability goals and promoting knowledge exchange beyond the EU.
Animal Task Force (ATF)	ATF brings together industry and research actors to support innovation in sustainable livestock systems, offering STEP UP a strategic forum for policy dialogue and the dissemination of science-based recommendations at the European level.
Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR)	SCAR coordinates agricultural research across EU Member States, and its strategic foresight activities can guide STEP UP in aligning with long-term European research and policy priorities related to food, climate, and rural development.
Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock (GASL)	GASL fosters global collaboration on sustainable livestock transformation, and STEP UP can use this network to share results and gain insights from worldwide initiatives targeting environmental and social sustainability.
One Health Initiative (OHI)	OHI emphasises the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health, aligning with STEP UP's holistic approach to livestock sustainability, particularly in areas such as animal welfare, antimicrobial resistance, and ecosystem health.
Global Farm Metric (GFM)	GFM provides a standardised framework for measuring on-farm sustainability, which complements STEP UP's efforts to assess and communicate the environmental and social performance of livestock systems

	in a comparable and transparent way.
Livestock Environmental Assessment and Performance Partnership (LEAP)	LEAP develops international guidelines for measuring the environmental performance of livestock supply chains, offering STEP UP a robust methodological foundation for assessing externalities and enhancing data compatibility.
The Livestock Research Group of the Global Research Alliance (GRA)	GRA's Livestock Research Group supports research collaboration to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in livestock, providing STEP UP access to cutting-edge climate mitigation strategies and global expertise.
European Association of Animal Production (EAAP)	EAAP serves as a key scientific platform for sharing animal production research; STEP UP will benefit from engaging in its conferences and sessions to present findings and connect with leading European scientists.
British Society of Animal Science (BSAS)	BSAS promotes the application of animal science to address practical challenges in livestock production, offering STEP UP opportunities to engage with researchers and practitioners.

Table 4: Relevant initiatives for STEP UP as identified via desk research and consortium feedback

3.2.4. Relevant Platforms

STEP UP will actively connect with established platforms that facilitate knowledge sharing, stakeholder engagement and policy dialogue across the European agricultural and livestock sectors. These platforms, such as **the EU CAP Network, AKIS, and digital tools like FarmBook and Wikifarmer**, serve as essential channels for disseminating project results, accessing stakeholder feedback, and aligning with broader European policy objectives. By participating in working groups, thematic networks, and online exchanges hosted by these platforms, STEP UP will ensure that its tools, data, and evidence-based recommendations reach relevant audiences, including policymakers, advisors, farmers, and researchers. Leveraging these platforms also supports STEP UP's aim to foster co-creation, enhance uptake of sustainable practices, and contribute to the operationalisation of EU Green Deal objectives within the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS).

An AKIS refers to the organised flow of knowledge among individuals, organisations, and institutions involved in agriculture and related fields. It plays a key role in contributing to the Common Agricultural Policy's (CAP) cross-cutting objectives, such as modernisation, knowledge sharing, innovation, and digitalisation. The concept of AKIS encompasses a wide range of actors, including farmers, foresters, their organizations and cooperatives, advisors, researchers, businesses, and NGOs, all of whom generate, share, and apply knowledge and innovation across sectors like agriculture, rural development, value chains, environment, climate, biodiversity, society, and consumers (EU SCAR, 2012).

Overall, AKIS networks across Europe are vast and their reach can be highly influential for the STEP UP project, depending on their size, scope, and regional presence. Below, we give an initial scanning of AKIS actors per consortium country.

STEP UP will leverage AKIS by actively engaging relevant stakeholders, such as farmers, advisors, researchers and policymakers, through a structured multi-actor approach that ensures co-creation and practical relevance of its outputs. Engagement with national CAP networks and participation in EU-level events will support integration of project findings into the wider AKIS framework, facilitating uptake at both policy and practice levels.

Concrete steps include establishing synergies with existing AKIS actors at the national level (Table 5), by data and tools tailored to sustainable livestock systems, and using these AKIS connections for disseminating findings, gathering feedback and influencing the development of innovation support mechanisms, ensuring that STEP UP contribute to the EU's broader goals.

Country	AKIS Stakeholder Network No / Type
Ireland	20 - (Network, research and academia, advisors and a few farmers)
Sweden	19 – (All types)
France	17 - (Advisors, farmers and research and academia)
Netherlands	31 – (All types, mostly advisors, CAP network and AKIS Coordinating bodies)
Spain	46 - (All types, mainly advisors, research and academia, authorities and AKIS coordination bodies)
Serbia	1 - Business organisations and suppliers
Portugal	28 - (Mostly advisors, authorities and researchers, farmers and research and academia)
Germany	28 - (Different types, mostly advisors, authorities and researchers)
Poland	22 -(Advisors and research and academia)
United Kingdom	28 - (Advisors and research and academia)

Table 5: AKIS Network in Partner Countries Overview *Data is based on <https://akisconnect.eu/akis-network>

3.3. Determining the importance and opportunities for cooperation

Determining the importance and opportunities for cooperation with PIPs is a critical step in ensuring that STEP UP's activities are aligned with the broader ecosystem of sustainable livestock innovation. This process involves evaluating each PIP based on its thematic alignment, geographic relevance, stakeholder reach, and potential to support knowledge exchange, policy influence, or methodological synergies. Importance is determined by assessing how closely a PIP's objectives, outputs, or target audiences overlap with STEP UP's goals, particularly in areas such as externality quantification, sustainable food systems, and livestock system transformation.

Opportunities for cooperation are identified by exploring how STEP UP can either contribute to or benefit from joint activities, such as co-organising events, sharing datasets, co-authoring outputs, or integrating tools and methodologies. PIPs with ongoing or upcoming activities in areas such as environmental performance assessment, animal welfare, digitalisation, or One Health are prioritised for strategic engagement. This targeted analysis helps STEP UP focus its resources on high-value collaborations that can enhance impact, accelerate dissemination, and create added value for both the project and the wider stakeholder community. It is important for STEP UP to have collaborations on different network levels.

3.4. Network level

STEP UP will establish connections and maintain activities with relevant PIPs on both the European and National levels of stakeholder structures to ensure effective knowledge flow, policy alignment and uptake of project outcomes.

3.4.1. European Commission Network

At the European level, STEP UP will engage with key EU projects and platforms such as the EU CAP Network, which are central to fostering innovation and knowledge exchange across the agricultural sector. Through participation in thematic groups, focus groups, and dissemination events, the project will contribute to and benefit from ongoing EU dialogue on sustainable livestock systems.

STEP UP has already established cooperation with the EU CAP Network portal by creating a dedicated project profile that provides key information about the project's objectives, scope, and activities (Figure 2). As part of this engagement, three practice abstracts have been published, contributing to the wider dissemination of preliminary results and practical insights. This early visibility within the EU CAP Network supports the project's goal of fostering synergies with other PIPs and enhances the accessibility and relevance of STEP UP outputs for practitioners and policymakers across Europe.

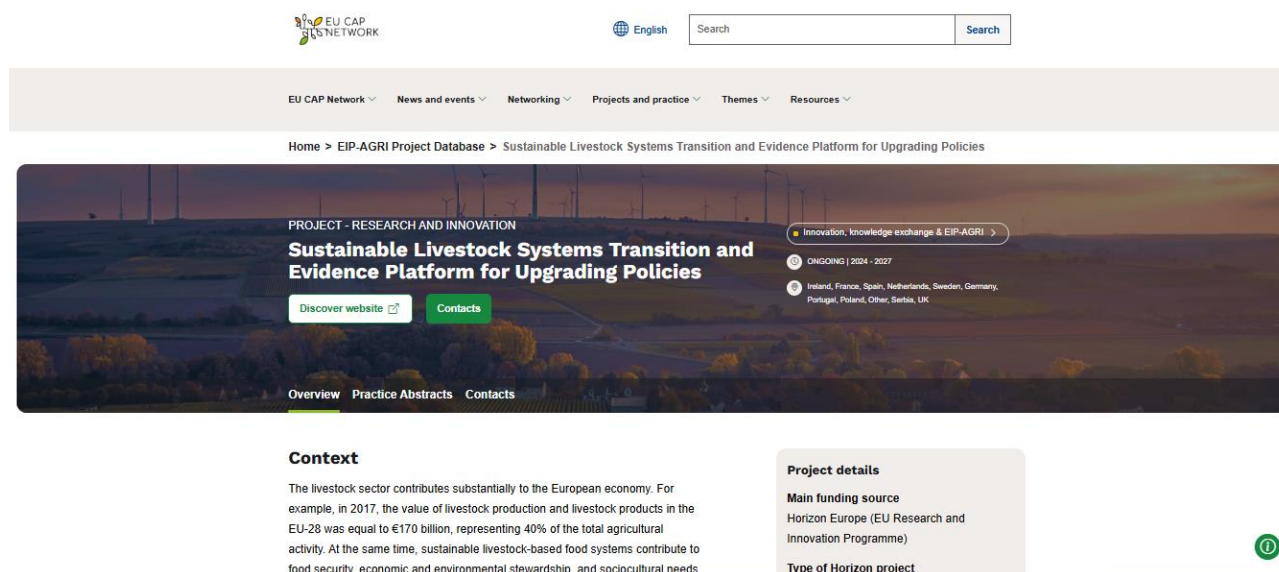


Figure 4: STEP UP at EU CAP Network

3.4.2. National Networks and Activities

At the national level, STEP UP partners will mobilise AKIS actors, national advisory services and stakeholder networks, including chambers of agriculture, producer organisations and policy bodies. For research and surveys, STEP UP partners will also examine and closely cooperate with institutions that will be part of the ILPS community and the basis for obtaining adequate data at the national level, especially related to WP2-WP6. These national connections will support the contextualization of STEP UP outcomes, promote co-creation with local stakeholders, and ensure that the project tools and recommendations are grounded in national realities and aligned with local priorities.

Together, these multi-level networks will serve as critical pathways for amplifying STEP UP's impact and ensuring its relevance across regions and governance levels.

4. Action plan for PIPs synergy

4.1. Selection and establishing contact with PIPs

As one of the main tasks in WP7 is T7.4, which is to establish synergistic links with relevant PIPs under the umbrella of the sustainable livestock integration. One of the main objectives is development of an Action Plan that will evaluate possibilities for collaboration with relevant PIPs and AKIS actors at international, national, and regional levels. After mapping the relevant collaboration, the next step would be selecting and establishing contact.

The PIPs Action Plan in the STEP UP project aims to foster strategic collaboration with relevant Projects, Initiatives, and Platforms to enhance the impact, visibility, and relevance of project outcomes. It supports knowledge exchange, methodological alignment, and broader stakeholder engagement, connecting researchers, policymakers, farmers, and advisors. These efforts contribute to the transformation of livestock production systems toward greater sustainability and resilience across Europe.

Its scope includes identifying and managing a dynamic network of PIPs through joint activities such as webinars, workshops, data sharing, and formal partnerships. Integrated across all project work packages, the plan ensures coordination and consistency while enabling co-creation and practical validation of results. Regular monitoring and updates help maintain alignment with evolving priorities, embedding STEP UP's work within wider innovation and policy frameworks.

4.1.1. Criteria for selection

The selection of relevant PIPs for collaboration within STEP UP begins with an initial review of each PIP's scope, objectives and activities, primarily conducted through reliable sources such as CORDIS, project websites and available results and deliverables. This initial screening helps identify thematic overlaps and shared areas of interest, particularly in relation to sustainability, livestock production, data frameworks, and policy relevance, before the in-depth classification takes place. This allows for a clear picture of what PIP is and to what extent it can be relevant for the project. Projects are prioritised where there is clear potential for mutual benefit, including methodological complementarity, shared stakeholder groups, or opportunities for co-hosted activities and joint dissemination.

Following the preliminary scan, a set of defined criteria is applied to assess the suitability of each PIP for collaboration. These criteria include:

- **Thematic relevance**, ensuring alignment with STEP UP's focus on sustainable livestock systems and externality assessment;
- **Potential for data or methodological sharing**, particularly regarding indicators, monitoring tools, or evaluation frameworks;
- **Policy leverage**, where the project has demonstrated or planned engagement with decision-makers at the EU or national level;
- **Geographic coverage**, aiming for diversity and representation across different regions and production systems; and
- **Stakeholder diversity**, which strengthens inclusivity and ensures that multiple perspectives (e.g. farmers, advisors, consumers, policymakers) are integrated.

By applying this structured approach, STEP UP ensure that selected PIPs represent a strategic partnership capable of enhancing the project's reach, impact and relevance throughout its implementation. The connection points are recorded in a monitoring table, and all potential collaborations are approved by the coordinator.

4.1.2. Contacting selected PIPs

Once relevant Projects, Initiatives, and Platforms (PIPs) have been identified and assessed against STEP UP's selection criteria, the next step involves establishing formal contact to initiate collaboration. This process is coordinated by Work Package 7, with support from other WP leaders where thematic alignment is strong. Initial outreach typically involves a personalised email introducing the STEP UP project, outlining the rationale for potential collaboration, and proposing a preliminary exchange (e.g. a short meeting or invitation to a joint event). When possible, existing relationships through consortium partners are leveraged to facilitate introductions and increase response rates.

The goal of the initial contact is to explore shared interests and define clear, actionable areas of cooperation.

4.2. Determination of the type of collaboration

The nature and depth of collaboration between STEP UP and selected PIPs will vary depending on thematic alignment, mutual interest, and resource availability. To ensure effective and meaningful engagement, STEP UP adopts a flexible approach to defining collaboration types, ranging from informal knowledge exchange in the form of meetings to structured joint activities. Early-stage dialogue with each PIP partner will be used to determine the most suitable form of collaboration, taking into account both project timelines and shared goals. This adaptable model allows STEP UP to build partnerships that are practical, relevant, and responsive to the evolving needs of all parties involved.

4.2.1. Possible collaboration approaches

Several collaboration formats are envisaged as part of the PIP Action Plan, each offering different levels of intensity and added value. This may include data exchange, cross-promotion of events, policy alignment, or joint knowledge-sharing activities. As part of this engagement process, STEP UP representatives provide background material (e.g. project factsheets, relevant deliverables, or the STEP UP Dashboard) and propose concrete next steps, such as joining a Knowledge Exchange Group (KEG), contributing to a joint workshop, or co-developing dissemination content. Each established connection is tracked in a shared PIP engagement database to ensure follow-up and transparency across the consortium. Where appropriate, formal collaboration agreements or memoranda of understanding may be considered to structure long-term partnerships. By offering a range of entry points and collaboration intensities, STEP UP ensures that its engagement with PIPs is inclusive, productive, and tailored to the strengths and priorities of each potential partner.

4.2.2. Aims of collaboration

The overarching aim of collaborating with Projects, Initiatives, and Platforms (PIPs) is to maximise the impact, visibility, and usability of STEP UP results through strategic cooperation and mutual knowledge exchange. These collaborations are intended not only to enhance STEP UP's scientific and policy relevance but also to contribute to the broader sustainability goals of the European Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Collaboration with external projects, initiatives, and platforms brings significant added value to STEP UP by enhancing the quality, relevance, and long-term impact of its work. Through mutual learning and knowledge exchange, the project gains access to diverse data, methodologies, and experiences, which help strengthen the technical foundation and practical relevance of its outputs. Such cooperation also fosters the harmonisation of approaches, enabling alignment of methodologies and indicators for assessing livestock sustainability. This promotes consistency across projects and increases the comparability and uptake of results at the European level.

In addition, collaboration plays a key role in broadening stakeholder engagement, allowing STEP UP to connect with new audiences such as farmers, advisors, and civil society organisations, which boosts participation and ensures the project's outputs address real-world challenges. Joint activities also contribute to a stronger policy impact, as co-developed messages and recommendations, particularly when channelled through EU-level platforms, carry greater weight and visibility. Working closely with external partners further supports the co-development and validation of tools, ensuring they are user-friendly, robust, and adaptable across different contexts. Ultimately, such partnerships secure the long-term sustainability and utilisation of STEP UP results by embedding them within wider innovation ecosystems and knowledge-sharing frameworks. Together, these aims reflect STEP UP's commitment to open collaboration, added value, and long-term impact in transforming livestock systems towards greater sustainability.

4.2.3. Management of collaboration

Effective management of collaboration with Projects, Initiatives, and Platforms (PIPs) is essential to ensure continuity, transparency, and alignment with STEP UP's strategic objectives. WP7 will lead the coordination of these collaborative efforts, in close cooperation with the project coordinator and other work package leaders (or when relevant, task leaders and consortium partners), depending on the thematic relevance of each PIP. The management framework is designed to be structured yet flexible, allowing for different levels and types of engagement while maintaining a coherent and consistent approach across the consortium.

Collaborations will be documented in a centralised PIP engagement tracking tool, located in the STEP UP repository and maintained by WP7, which records the type of cooperation, contacts, planned joint activities, outputs, and status updates. Regular internal reviews will be conducted to assess the progress of each collaboration and identify opportunities for further integration or scaling up.

Where relevant, formalised agreements (e.g. Memoranda of Understanding or Letters of Intent) may be considered for longer-term or resource-intensive collaborations. Additionally, joint actions will be planned in alignment with STEP UP's communication and dissemination strategy, led by WP7 and FSH, ensuring that collaborative outputs are fully integrated into the project's outreach and policy engagement efforts.

Through this coordinated approach, STEP UP aims to build strong, purposeful, and well-managed partnerships that amplify the project's reach and reinforce its contributions to sustainable livestock development across Europe and beyond.

4.3. Planning joint activities

Joint activities with PIPs are a central element of STEP UP's engagement strategy, designed to facilitate meaningful collaboration, increase project visibility and ensure the exchange of knowledge and experiences across complementary initiatives. These activities will serve as a platform to promote STEP UP tools and findings, align policy messages, and jointly address key challenges in sustainable livestock systems. WP7 will coordinate the planning of these joint actions to ensure coherence with project milestones and stakeholder needs.

4.3.1. Possible conferences/workshops/webinars

Joint activities will take a variety of forms depending on the objectives of each collaboration, the stakeholder group involved, and the timing within the project lifecycle. Planned formats include:

- **Joint webinars** on thematic topics such as livestock sustainability metrics, animal welfare, climate adaptation, or farm-level decision support tools. These will be jointly organised with relevant projects or platforms and open to a broad audience, including researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.
- **Thematic workshops** (virtual or in-person), targeting more focused stakeholder groups such as farmers, advisors, NGOs, or national policy actors, with the aim of exchanging methods, experiences, and practical insights.
- **STEP UP contributions to external conferences**, such as the EAAP Annual Meeting, Animal Task Force events, or CAP Network seminars, where joint sessions with PIPs can be organised.
- **Cross-project roundtables or panels**, particularly around key dissemination periods (e.g. policy brief launches, public consultations), to present consolidated recommendations or position papers.

- **Participation in KEGs** by invited PIP representatives, as both contributors and beneficiaries of co-creative dialogue.

These activities will not only strengthen the reach of STEP UP but also contribute to the sustainability of its outcomes by embedding them in a wider community of practice.

4.4. Public Communication

Effective public communication is essential to ensure the visibility, accessibility, and societal relevance of STEP UP's results. It plays a critical role in connecting the project's scientific outputs with broader audiences, including farmers, advisors, civil society organisations, media, and the general public. As part of its strategy for engaging with PIPs, STEP UP will integrate communication efforts into all joint activities and ensure that key messages are shared in clear, inclusive, and impactful ways. STEP UP can also be used to bring together communication initiatives carried out by partners to disseminate them more globally.

Public communication activities will be aligned with STEP UP's overall dissemination and communication strategy and will leverage both central and partner-level channels. These include the project's official website, social media accounts (LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter/X), newsletters, and the STEP UP Dashboard. An important point for communication (especially towards the public) in local-level outreach is to use native languages. Consortium partners' native speakers will play a key role in these activities to reach diverse audiences and improve uptake among practitioners and regional stakeholders.

By embedding communication in every phase of collaboration with PIPs, STEP UP will ensure that the knowledge generated is not only shared within expert circles but also reaches and resonates with the broader public, reinforcing the project's commitment to transparency, engagement, and social impact.

5. Monitoring of PIP Activities

Monitoring and evaluation are essential to ensure that STEP UP's collaborations with Projects, Initiatives, and Platforms are purposeful, strategic, and contribute to the overall impact of the project. To that end, WP7 will implement a structured system for tracking engagement activities and assessing their effectiveness. This system will help maintain alignment with project objectives, foster transparency across the consortium, and support timely decision-making for ongoing and future interactions.

5.1. Monitoring and Tracking

All interactions with PIPs will be systematically monitored using a centralised engagement tracking tool, developed and maintained by WP7. In a shared repository, all information will be updated regularly and provide a clear overview of all contacted leads, achieved collaborations and joint activities. So far, collaborations have been initiated with the following PIPs:

PIP Name	Type of PIP	Activities
NIV NS	Scientific Institute	Memorandum of Understanding Between Scientific Veterinary Institute "Novi Sad" and STEP UP project
BrightSpace	HE project	Joint meeting and cooperation on CAP Models
AGMEMOD Network	Platform	Synergy on CAP Models
EU CAP Network	Platforms	STEP UP Practice abstract published on the platform
Digi4Live	HE project	Article with Digi4Live
Digi4Live	HE project	Joint workshop for "Innovation in livestock"
Digi4Live	HE project	Memorandum of Understanding in the process of signing
Re-Livestock	HE project	Memorandum of Understanding in the process of signing
Pahweys	HE project	Memorandum of Understanding in the process of signing

Table 6: Activities with relevant PIPs

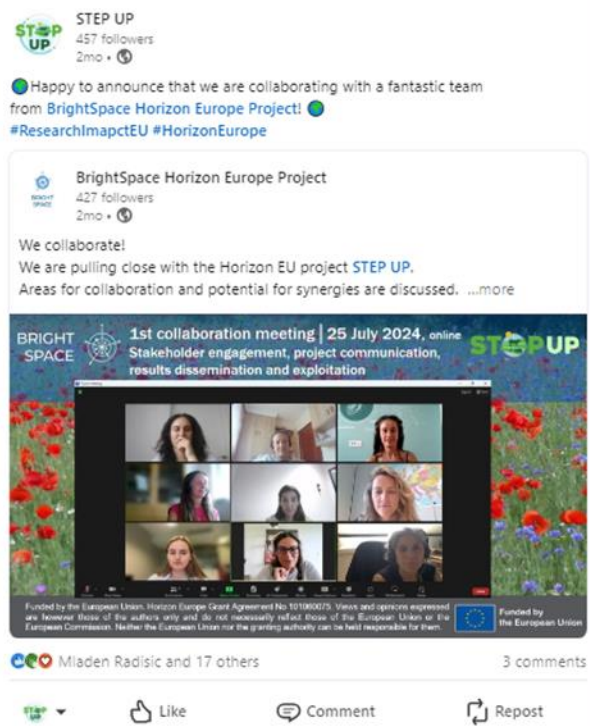


Figure 5: Meeting with BrightSpace project

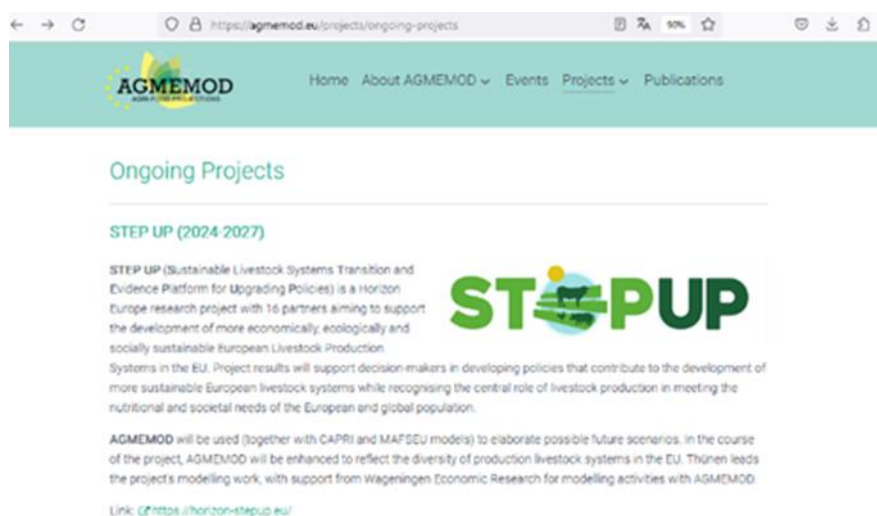


Figure 6: STEP UP at AGMEMOD Network

5.2. Reporting

Reporting on PIP-related activities will occur at both internal and external levels. Internally, WP7 will produce periodic summaries (aligned with project reporting periods) to inform the Executive Board and relevant Work Packages about the status and outcomes of ongoing collaborations. These reports will include quantitative indicators (e.g. number of active PIPs, events co-organised, data exchanges conducted) and qualitative assessments (e.g. perceived value, policy relevance, stakeholder feedback).

Externally, highlights of successful collaborations and key lessons learned will be integrated into public deliverables, newsletters, social media updates, and policy briefs. In particular, WP7 will ensure that results

from joint activities are properly disseminated and that synergies are communicated to wider audiences, including policymakers and civil society.

This continuous monitoring and reporting process will help STEP UP maintain a high standard of engagement, demonstrate the added value of its networked approach, and ensure accountability across its collaboration ecosystem.

6. Results, outcomes and Impact

Collaborations with selected PIPs have already yielded tangible outcomes that contribute to the broader goals of STEP UP. Initial engagements, particularly with the EU CAP Network, AGMEMOD Network, have supported early visibility and positioning of the project within the European research and policy landscape. For example, STEP UP has successfully published three practice abstracts on the EU CAP Network portal, promoting practical knowledge exchange and reinforcing the project's relevance to agricultural stakeholders.

The inputs gathered from the aligned projects contributed to the validation of activities at the level of the different FPs, including the selection of indicators, stakeholder mapping and planning of tool development and testing. These early synergies not only helped to refine the project activities but also increased the credibility and policy relevance of the new results.

A joint workshop between the Digi4Live and STEP UP projects was held as part of collaborative activities with relevant PIPs. This event provided a valuable opportunity for a broader audience to become familiar with the objectives, ongoing tasks, and future plans of both projects. Additionally, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is currently in the process of being formalised between the two projects to further strengthen their collaboration.



Figure 7: STEP UP & Digi4Live workshop

Looking ahead, these collaborations will continue to evolve into co-creation opportunities, joint dissemination efforts (e.g., shared webinars), and the integration of STEP UP outputs into existing digital

knowledge systems (e.g., FarmBook). Ultimately, these efforts will ensure that STEP UP results are not only well communicated but also actively embedded in the broader innovation ecosystem, supporting the long-term exploitation, scaling, and impact of the project.

7. Next steps

As this action plan continued its smooth development and ensured the progress of the project, the following steps were foreseen:

1. Begin executing the engagement strategy by initiating or enhancing relationships with priority PIPs from the inventory. Assign consortium roles for each collaboration opportunity based on thematic focus and institutional or national relevance.
2. Maintain the PIPs inventory as a living document by regularly reviewing relevant data, collecting input through internal surveys and incorporating feedback from ongoing collaborations and events.
3. Launch joint activities by initiating co-creation efforts, including webinars, workshops, and KEGs with relevant PIPs.
4. Where appropriate, formalise high-value partnerships through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) or other agreements.
5. Prepare and facilitate collaborations for WP8 and WP9 to maintain continuous collaboration for long-term integration and dissemination of the project.
6. Integrate collaboration outcomes into STEP UP outputs (e.g. Sustainability indicators for WP2, Tools and models for WP3-WP5, and scenario development for WP6)

8. Conclusion

This deliverable outlines a comprehensive and dynamic approach to identifying, engaging, and collaborating with relevant Projects, Initiatives, and Platforms (PIPs) to enhance the impact and visibility of the STEP UP project. By establishing clear selection criteria, structured collaboration models, and a proactive engagement strategy, the Action Plan provides a solid foundation for building synergies that extend beyond the immediate consortium and contribute to broader efforts in promoting sustainable livestock systems across Europe.

Through close coordination with European and national networks, joint knowledge exchange activities, and integrated communication efforts, STEP UP will ensure that its findings are co-developed, validated, and disseminated in collaboration with key stakeholders across the research, policy, and practitioner landscape. The monitoring and reporting mechanisms described herein will support transparency and continuous improvement of these collaborations throughout the project lifecycle. Ultimately, this Action Plan reinforces STEP UP's commitment to openness, inclusivity, and long-term relevance, positioning the project as a central contributor to the transformation of European livestock systems.