



European Thematic Network for interactive and innovative knowledge exchange on sheep health and nutrition

Evaluation of the project and strategy for network and knowledge reservoir sustainability

30/06/2023



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1. Introduction

A global evaluation of the project impact has been carried out in 2 stages:

1. A web-based consultation:
It was designed and sent to the consortium's partners as well as the members of the STWGs to get their feedbacks on the methodology and the end-user material.
2. Feedback from stakeholders participating to final transnational events (paper-based)

1.1. The web-based consultation

A series of 46 questions have been designed to capture feedback from the consortium and the STWG around 4 broad themes:

- Methodology used
- End-user material produced
- Continuity of the project
- Sustainability of the project

1.2. Stakeholders' feedback on the project

A 2-pages questionnaire has been designed and translated in the project's languages to capture stakeholders' feedback on the project. Ten qualitative questions were asked.

2. Results

2.1. Results from the web-based consultation

In total 34 people answered the online survey in the Autumn 2022-Spring 2023. Sixty-two percent of respondents were STWG members (See Figure 1). All partners' countries responded to the survey (See Figure 2).

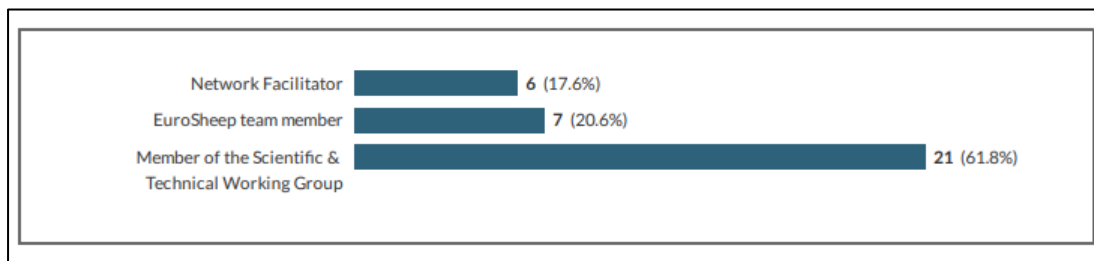


Figure 1 – Respondents' type

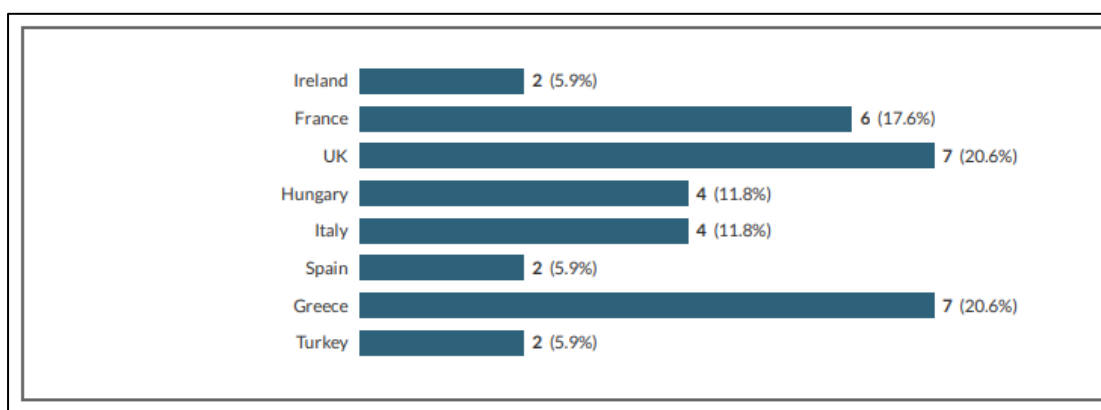


Figure 2 – Country of origin

2.1.1. Questions on the methodology:

Online Survey on the needs (Spring-Summer 2020):

Overall, respondents thought it had been easy to advertise the survey on needs (53% 'somewhat easy', 40% 'easy'). Sixty-three percent of respondents used their Operational groups to circulate the survey, and 97% used social media to further advertise it. This reflects the fact that the survey was circulated just when the various lockdowns due to the pandemic started.

French respondents stated that >100 people answered the survey in French, Greek respondents thought >100 people answered their survey, for Turkish respondents, it was also >100; for Hungarian, it was 51-100; for Ireland, it was >100; for Italy, >100; for Spain, 51-100, and for the UK, 51-100.

When asked about the positive aspects of the survey, the following ideas were mentioned:

- Well-structured and detailed questions
- Practical questions, farmer friendly
- Easy to fill and disseminate (online link)

- Ranking of the needs
- Anonymous so allowed honest answers from farmers.

However, some points were thought detrimental:

- Most respondents thought the survey was too long for farmers to answer.
- Some of the questions were unclear and open to various interpretations.
- Given that it was mostly done only online, people could not always ask questions or precisions.
- The survey could not be answered easily on a smartphone.
- We should have split the questions by sector (e.g. dairy & meat).

The improvements suggested were to allow more time to collect the answers of the survey, allow more open questions in the survey itself, use live events, trade fairs, farmers' group meetings to disseminate further the survey. The latter were impinged by the Covid19 situation but are nonetheless valid suggestions for future projects.

Identification of needs:

The collection of needs was presented in a global excel file by the Spanish partners (WP leaders). Overall, all respondents thought that the format was easy to use (82% somewhat easy, 18% very easy).

Sixty-five percent thought their stakeholders were well engaged to discuss the needs during the NWS1 series, and 94% thought the international STWG organised in Nov 2020 was useful to refine the identified needs and prepare the TNWS2.

Solution to needs:

Regarding the solutions identification, 97% thought that the format of the needs (excel sheet) was easy to use. Eighty-two percent thought there was a very useful collaboration between their colleagues to find solutions. Most of respondents (96%) thought that the pre-selection of solutions prior to the online TNWS2 was useful. The latter was organised to ensure that the online workshop worked seamlessly and that participants knew in advance which breakout rooms they would be in, they could focus, and no time would be wasted during the TNWS2.

Adaptation of solutions (solution market):

After the TNWS2, between 8 and 24 solutions from other countries were 'bought' by the different countries. The most solutions 'bought' were by the French partners (24).

Eighteen percent thought it was not easy to decide on which solutions to test – stating the lack of face-to-face discussion (because of Covid) to really understand how solutions could be implemented on their systems, the lack of details in some solutions, the lack of funds to

properly test them in some cases and the fact that different farmers attended different NWSs and TNWSs.

The majority thought it was somewhat easy (54%) or very easy (28%) to decide on the solutions to test. The reasons given for the latter were the farmers' engagement and eagerness to test them, and the discussions between the farmers and the teams after the TNWS2.

Eighty percent used their farmers Operational Groups to identify candidates for testing, and 90% thought the collaborations with their colleagues was useful to identify willing farmers.

2.1.2. Questions on the end-user material:

Infographic with survey results:

At the time of the work, 90% of respondents stated their country had prepared an infographic on the survey results, and 97% thought it would be a useful tool for dissemination.

Solution templates:

Sixty-eight percent thought the PPT slides with the short description of the solutions was a very useful format for dissemination, and 32% thought it was somewhat useful. The main reason being that they provided a nice concise introduction of the solution.

The improvements suggested were: using videos or more photos for some solutions and adding more links to detailed documents.

All respondents thought the solutions uploaded as a word document on the website were helpful (42% somewhat helpful and 68% very helpful).

Assessment of solutions:

Sixty-nine percent of respondents thought the assessment questionnaire was easy to fill in by farmers, and 84% thought it was easy to fill in by advisers. However, when asked about improvement, the following was mentioned:

- The estimation of cost depends on several factors and varies according to time-scale, surface, number of animal considered. The analysis without all these data is not easy, nor the comparison between farms.
- The range proposed for costs is not very easy to interpret.
- Shorter questionnaire

Respondents also used their Operational Groups to target farmers (65%).

Leaflet on the project:

At the time of the answers, 77% of respondents said their country had printed a physical copy of their respective leaflet. The number of printed leaflets ranged from 15 to 1000, and most respondents thought that nearly all of them had been distributed.

On improving the leaflet, the suggestion to include pictures of the solutions or the tips and tricks was proposed.

2.1.3. Questions for the continuity of the website

EuroSheep website:

When asked how often they accessed the EuroSheep website, the answers were as shown in Figure 3:

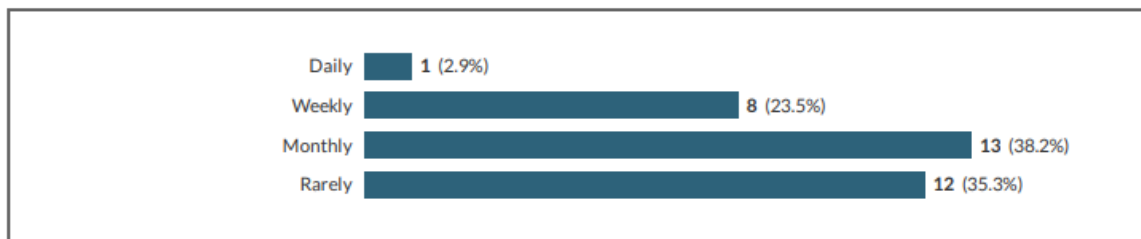


Figure 3. How often do you access the EuroSheep website?

Figure 4 shows how often respondents access the knowledge reservoir section of the website.

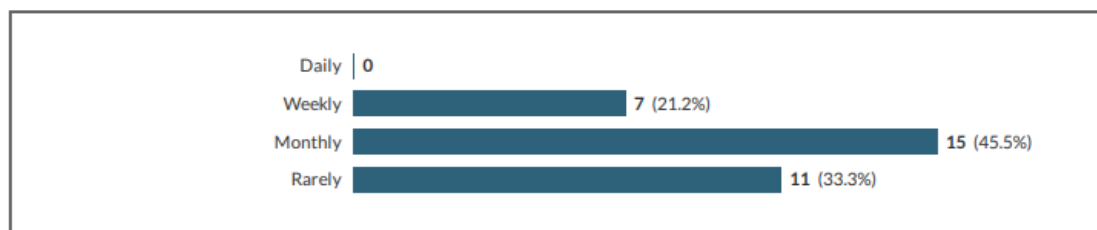


Figure 4. How often do you access the EuroSheep knowledge reservoir?

Seventy-one percent of respondents would consider using the information from the EuroSheep website in 2 years, and 44% in 5 years' time.

EU Farmbook:

Only 30% of respondents had heard about the EU Farmbook project, but 56% know about the Euraknos project (NB – the prequel to EU Farmbook).

However, 97% of respondents thought it would be somewhat useful (38%) and very useful (59%) to have a ‘super knowledge reservoir’ with all EU thematic network solutions. 59% stated they would use such a facility. Respondents stated they would use such a facility for updating their knowledge, for research, for advice, for training materials

This is encouraging for the EU Farmbook, which aims to provide such a facility. However, not many respondents were aware of that project, so more knowledge transfer and dissemination would be useful to promote this facility.

2.1.4. Questions on the sustainability of the project

Fifty-eight percent of respondents thought that the relevance of the material produced will last between 2 and 5 years, and 39% thought it would last more than 5 years. Additionally, 67% thought they would still use the information from the project in 2 years and 35% in 5 years.

When asked about advising their colleagues to use EuroSheep website in 2 years, 79% thought they would, and 44% thought they would advise their colleagues in 5 years.

These results are a snapshot but are nonetheless encouraging for the perennity of the information contained on the website and produced by the project.

2.1.5. Conclusions on the web-based consultation

Most respondents seemed to have agreed on the methodology used during the project, and are content with the type of outcomes and materials produced. On the continuity of the information on the website, it is encouraging to see that most people thought the content would still be useful for research, advice and further training in 2-5 years’ time, even after the project has stopped. The potential to transfer all of the knowledge reservoir from the EuroSheep website onto a more generic EU website (EU Farmbook) is potentially a win-win solution to ensure the perennity of the information.

2.2. Results from the face to face questionnaires with stakeholders

In total, 75 people responded to the survey. The repartition by each country is shown in Figure 5.

Sixty-one percent of respondents were farmers, and 21% were advisors.

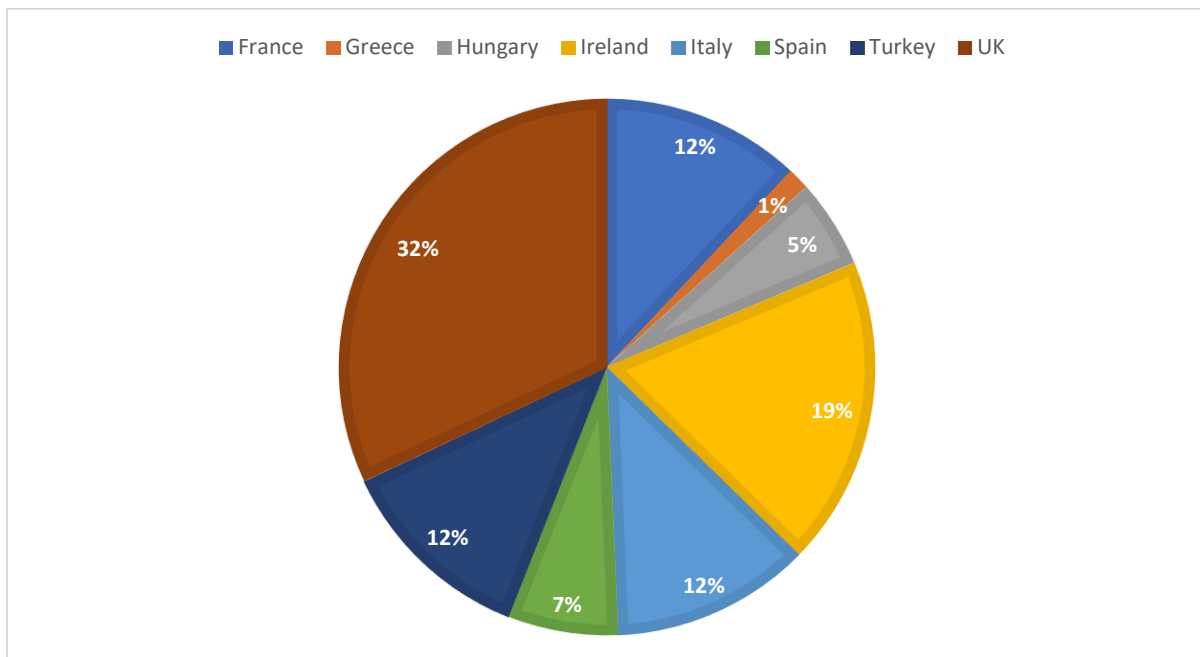


Figure 5. Respondents by country:

Seventy-three percent of respondents had already participated in activities organised by EuroSheep, and 49% were very satisfied and 50% somewhat satisfied by the project.

Forty-four percent agreed and 51% totally agreed that EuroSheep is beneficial to the sheep sector at the national level. And 46% agreed and 47% totally agreed that EuroSheep is beneficial to the sheep sector at the European level.

Regarding the communication and knowledge transfer of the EuroSheep solutions, 71% thought they were about right, whilst 29% thought it was not enough.

Seventy-four percent of respondents thought EuroSheep brought them some new knowledge to improve sheep nutrition and health management, and 24% thought it brought them a lot of new knowledge.

Regarding practice change and decision making change, 77% of respondents thought this new knowledge would change the way they farm ‘a little bit’, whilst 13% thought it would change the way they farm ‘a lot’. Eight percent thought it would not change anything for them.

The main benefits of EuroSheep, according to the respondents, are shown in Figure 6.

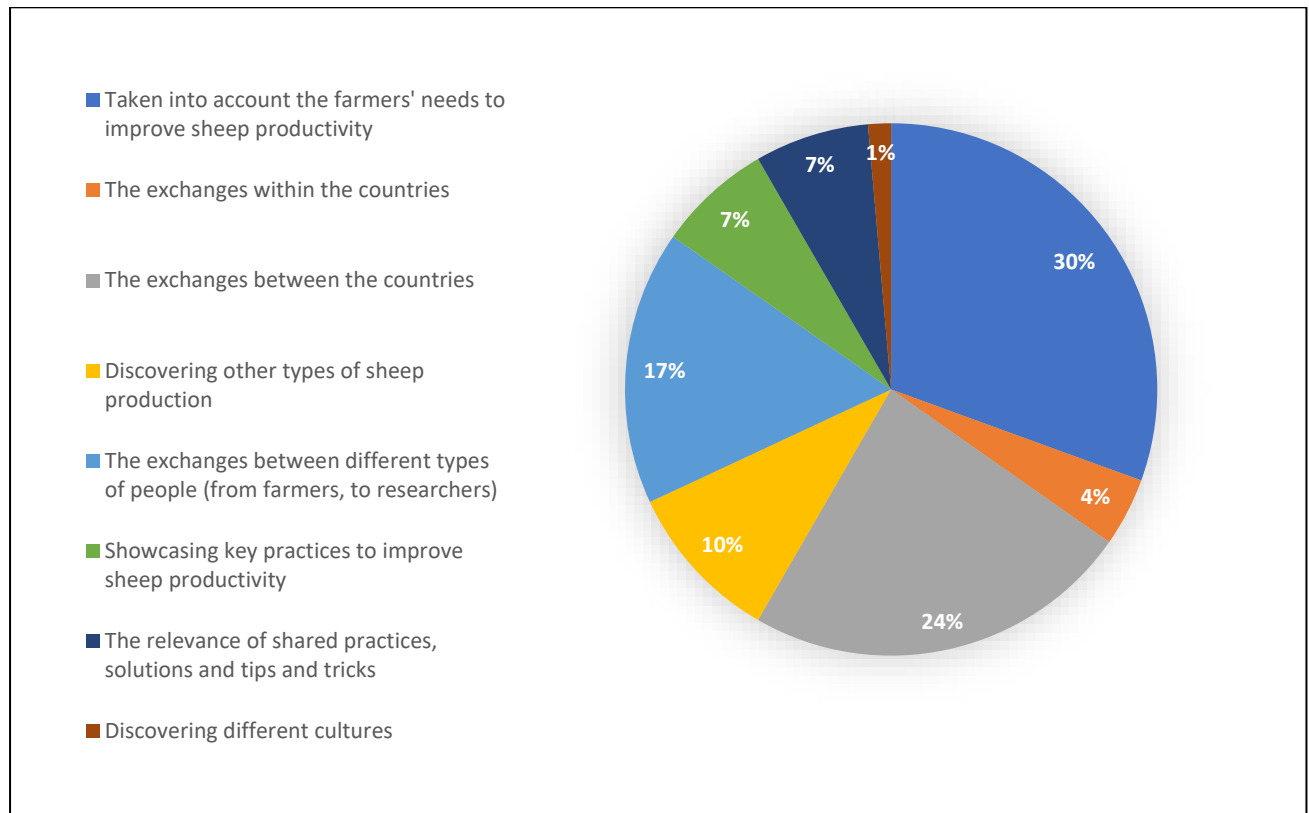


Figure 6. Main benefits of EuroSheep

3. Conclusions

The evaluation exercises showed a concordance between the project’s members and associated colleagues and the stakeholders targeted. Overall, the methodology, activities, dissemination and information were found positive by both groups. The stakeholders were very happy with the new knowledge from the project and the format of the exchanges. This was also repeated during the feedback sessions from each of the TNWSs.

In terms of the sustainability of the project, from the responses obtained, it seems that people think that a 2-5 years’ timescale is acceptable without changing much on the information on

the website. Using the facilities potentially offered by the EU Farmbook beyond this time would be a solution to circumvent the need to pay for the website maintenance after 5 years.

Maintaining the website in Year 4 and 5 would cost 4,960 euros (quote from the website provider). A quote for maintenance for a further 3 years is expected, but would certainly be around ~ 10,000 euros. One strategy would be to include those potential prices in any new project wishing to use specifically the EuroSheep website.