



1st Annual Meeting of European Network Agroecology Living Labs and Research Infrastructures



Group picture of the Network members

The **1st annual meeting of the European Network of Agroecology Living Labs and Research Infrastructures** (the Network) **took place in Helsinki on 6-8 November 2024**, organized jointly by ÖMKI and LUKE. The main objectives of the event were to help the members get familiar with one another and to launch or continue co-learning and co-creation activities that support the continuous building of the Network. The Network, which currently has a total of 17 members, was represented by 13 members (10 living labs and 3 research infrastructure) over the two and a half days.

The meeting started with member introductions, which was an informal way for the members to explore each other's activities. Then the participants gained deeper knowledge on the Work Packages (WPs) of the Partnership with the help of WP leaders, especially discussing the Network's links and connection points to the different activities of the WPs.

The rest of the meeting was packed with interactive sessions. The first one, facilitated by Jan Hassink (WUR), was focused on gathering the experiences of participants on the lessons learnt during the ALL-Ready pilot network phase and AE4EU project prior the Partnership, on what the members can bring to the current Network as well as what their expectations are of being part of it. The members, then, **finalised the Network's vision**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

and mission and co-developed a draft action plan, facilitated by Graeme Dean (CSIC). The agreed vision of the Network is the following: *“The Network of Agroecology (AE) Living Labs (LL) and Research Infrastructures (RI) fosters evidence-based AE (for practice and policy) by connecting LLs and RIs promoting place-based participatory innovations across Europe.”* The exercise also allowed for the identification and ranking of 39 potential activities for the action plan that could be associated with current objectives of the Network.



Workshop session for gathering the experiences from ALL-Ready and AE4EU and expectations of the members from the Network.

The second day started with discussions around the **criteria and membership system of the Network**, facilitated by Valéria Csonka (ÖMKi) in cooperation with the task core team (CREA and BPI), aimed to gather member’s input to finetune these systems in order to prepare the 1st wave of applications.

The goal of the following session on **joint research activities** led by Bálint Kapcsos (ÖMKi) was to brainstorm about possible research themes based on members’ common interest and eventually select themes that could be further elaborated for future implementation. The members were interested in the following three themes: **agroecology market development, from practice-based thinking to agroecology** and **biodiversity**.





Moreover, specific research topics, and their scopes were further identified within the chosen three research themes.

The afternoon of the second day focused on finding effective ways to support communication between the Network and the different WPs of the Partnership, facilitated by Titta Tapiola (LUKE). During the session, the members shared their expectations and needs about internal communication within the Network and between the Partnership and the Network. Then, the members took part in an imagination exercise where they envisioned what they should be achieving in 3 years' time as individual LLs or RIs as part of the Network and they also pictured where the Network will be in 2027.

The last workshop, facilitated by Audrey N'gom (INRAE), introduced the ongoing global mapping exercise, aimed at identifying international networks, projects, and initiatives similar to the Network's profile. This mapping effort serves as a resource to facilitate the Network's external collaboration with selected initiatives. Through discussions on various networks by the members, several key areas of interest were identified, such as the need for information on local contexts, expected results, specific tools, and their objectives in advancing agroecological transitions. This feedback has allowed to refine the mapping methodology, incorporating insights from members. The global mapping is scheduled to be finalized by mid-December and the results will be presented to Network members in January 2025.

On the last day, the research activities of the LUKE Institute were presented in combination with a field visit. LUKE gave an overview as an RI about its operations, objectives and how its various activities and research projects contribute to the agroecology transition, as well as information on its local research sites.

Overall, the annual meeting was very successful for both members and project partners since it contributed to the co-creation of several activities important for the functioning of the Network while it enabled members to build connections with one another. **The next in-person meeting of the Network will take place in Bordeaux, France on 13-15 October 2025 back-to-back with the International Forum of Agroecosystem Living Labs (15-17 October 2025),** but with the attendance of a larger group since the first wave of applications to the Network is now open.

© Korinna Varga (ÖMKI), 2024.



Co-funded by
the European Union