



# **Cross-border Operational Groups EIP- AGRI Estonia.**

**Konstantin Mihhejev**  
**National Rural Network Estonia**

## Call 2017: cross-border EIP cooperation

- ✓ Estonia in 2017 joined EIP DG „club“.
- ✓ Call closed 26/01/2018.
- ✓ Total call budget: € 1 000 000.
- ✓ Max 350 000 per Project.
- ✓ The first call resulted in a number of applications with potential cooperation partners from Finland and Italy.
- ✓ Two of four applications were approved.
- ✓ As an example:

*„MAVAS“ is developing an automated biosensing system for detecting three of the most common bacteria causing mastitis in dairy cows. Their Finnish partner is an Operational Group that develops related technologies to monitor animal health. On-farm pilot testing for both projects will be organised in Estonia and in Finland“*



# What is supported?

**Innovation cooperation** in agriculture, food, and forestry sector, as in:

- ✓ pilot projects;
- ✓ development of new products, practices, processes and technologies;
- ✓ dissemination of the results of these projects, including cross-border activities.

*„Focus on solving a practical problem, developing a new product etc, by joining the needs of the enterprise and the expert knowledge of the research and development institution.“*



<https://www.digar.ee/viewer/et/nlib-digar:322958/281297/page/1>

# Why go cross-border?

- ✓ A small country has limited resources (people, budget, time), so cooperation is of vital importance.
- ✓ Cannot do everything ourselves, to find solutions to all problems ourselves, nor cover all possible topics.
- ✓ Benefitting from the existing knowledge and expertise, rather than invest in yet another project on the same topic.
- ✓ Cross-border cooperation is a win-win situation (economy of scales effect).



**COLLABORATING ACROSS BORDERS**


 Some countries are encouraging cross-border collaboration by including this opportunity in their calls for Operational Groups. Estonia launched a dedicated call for cross-border Operational Groups in December 2017. Konstantin Mihhejev from the Estonian National Rural Network: "Many Estonian farmers, researchers and small entrepreneurs had told us that they had a clear need and interest in cooperating with partners from other countries. It can help them to develop new technologies, products or potential markets with the help of Operational Group partners from abroad. As a result of our first call we received four applications, including potential cooperation partners from Finland and Italy. We are very happy with this result. These partnerships will create further opportunities to achieve good results within the frame of the project, and to disseminate results more broadly at EU level."

► More information: [website of the Estonian NRN](#)

*"In the German state of Schleswig-Holstein, a local Operational Group has been working with an Irish expert to improve pasture management. The group's positive experience has encouraged the Managing Authority to include opportunities for international cooperation in their next call. Other Managing Authorities may do the same. If you would like to set up an Operational Group, I recommend contacting your national or regional authority to find out more about the possibilities for international cooperation."*

- Konstantin Mihhejev,  
Estonian National Rural Network -

# Preparations for the cross-border call

- ✓ Exchange of information with colleagues in other countries.
- ✓ Close contact and exchange of information between MA/PA/NRN.
- ✓ Two webinars for potential applicants (in cooperation with **all** partners).
- ✓ Active attitude of Innovation Network/NRN (info, contacts, enthusiasm) throughout the process.

PRESS ARTICLE TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION JANUARY 2018



## Press article 250words

### Exchanging innovative practices across the European Union

#### Operational Groups bring in partners from abroad to share knowledge and skills

EIP-AGRI Operational Groups are innovative projects that bring together farmers, researchers, advisers and others to address specific problems and opportunities in European farming and forestry. With over 400 Operational Groups ongoing across Europe, the people involved are realising that innovation does not stop at national borders. Helena Pärenson, chief specialist in the Research and Development Department at the Ministry of Rural Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, says: "Cooperation across borders can really benefit everyone involved."

National and regional Managing Authorities of European rural development programmes regularly publish calls for Operational Groups, and select their projects. In Estonia, the call that was launched December 2017 is dedicated to cross-border cooperation for innovation. Konstantin Mihhejev, officer at the Estonian National Rural Network, knows that other countries share the same interest in stimulating cooperation across borders. He says: "If you would like to set up an Operational Group, I recommend contacting your national or regional authority to find out more about the possibilities for international cooperation."

**<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/news-events/press-media/press-release/operational-groups-bring-partners-abroad-share>**

# Challenges faced so far

- ✓ The conditions may vary across different countries/regions (small details).
- ✓ The timing of calls varies across different countries e.g., How to plan cooperation when:

- ✓ „arriving late” - already existing OGs, who have their budget and activities fixed. How to finance their cross-border cooperation?
- ✓ „the big unknown” - the potentially funded OGs, who may not get funded.



From left to right: farmer Ville Niskanen, ÄLYREHU coordinator Pekka Kilpeläinen, Pilmaklaster coordinator Hardi Tamm, and adviser Eila Niskanen on a farm visit in Finland.

## Transnational cooperation in Estonia

In December 2017, Estonia launched a call specifically for cross-border Operational Groups. The first call resulted in a number of approved applications with cooperation partners from Finland.

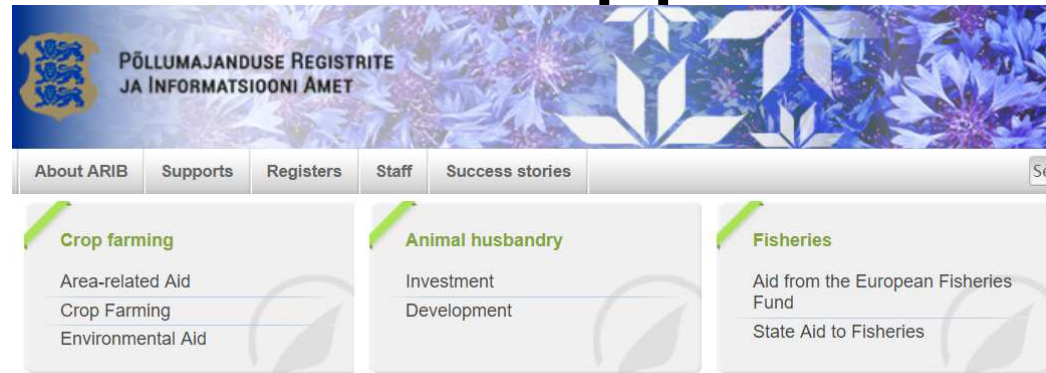
Hardi Tamm is coordinator of the Estonian Operational Group 'Pilmaklaster' (Estonian Dairy Cluster). They have signed a cooperation agreement with the Finnish Operational Group ÄLYREHU. The Estonian project is developing an automated biosensing system to detect three of the most common bacteria causing mastitis in dairy cows. Their Finnish partner develops related technologies to monitor animal health, focusing on the analysis of nutritional markers in milk. The partners are going to organise on-farm pilot testing for each of the projects both in Estonia and in Finland.

Hardi Tamm: "Our experience so far has been very positive; everything has been arranged smoothly from both sides. Considering the 900 km distance between the coordinators, we have met face-to-face only twice, but we keep in touch through teleconferences and e-mails. I think both groups benefit from this transnational cooperation. Both countries have a strong capacity to develop digital tools. We are hoping that the collaboration can help to spread results more widely in agriculture."

► **More Information:** [Estonian Operational Group Pilmaklaster](#) (in Estonian) and [Finnish Operational Group ÄLYREHU](#)



# Final EIP call for applications 2019



- ✓ Call - autumn 2019.
- ✓ Total call budget around € 1 200 000.
- ✓ Max 350 000 per Project.
- ✓ EIP OG's at national level.
- ✓ Including cross-border activities.



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# Many thanks for your attention!

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