



PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR. 85

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Assessing the conditions for a Living Lab

Many EU projects are using multi-actor approaches, such as living labs, to develop solutions to identified problems. On the basis of the experiences in the [6 Agrilink living labs](#) we identified four main conditions that need to be considered when deciding whether a living lab can be a good approach in a specific situation. In order to make these lessons learned applicable in practice we formulated a central question for each of these conditions. Then we broke down each condition into assessment questions which address specific aspects and signal important points of attention when establishing a living lab.

Condition 1: Complexity of the challenge. Central question: Is the challenge complex enough to justify a Living Lab AND harmonious enough to allow collaboration?

Assessment questions: Do stakeholders agree on the direction of change? Do stakeholders agree on the possible solutions to the challenge? To what degree is the theme of the lab in alignment with the private interest of the end user?

Condition 2: Enabling setting. Central question: Does the setting allow for interaction and experimentation? Assessment questions: Is there room for experimentation and flexibility in the outcome of the process? Can you mobilise enough resources for the process? Are the consequences of failure acceptable? Are stakeholders used to discuss and participate?

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Assessing the conditions for a living lab

Condition 3: Energy to move. Central question: Do the stakeholders want to work on the challenge and engage in a Living Lab process? Assessment questions: Do the stakeholders experience a sense of urgency to change? Do they have the capacity to engage in the living lab? Do they trust each other and recognize their interdependence in solving the challenge?

Condition 4: Methodological preparation. Central question: Is there a creative facilitator who knows what he or she is doing? Assessment questions: Does the facilitator combine leadership and mandate with a curious and flexible attitude? Is the living lab taking place in the influence sphere of the facilitator? Is the facilitator experienced to select appropriate tools in unexpected situations?

If many of the answers to these questions are positive, it seems a good idea to start a living lab or a similar multi actor approach. The questions with negative answers indicate where challenges can be expected and what requires extra attention is needed in developing the lab. Agrilink is developing pedagogical material to assist facilitators in assessing the situation and in dealing with the challenges in their specific situation and establish and run effective living.



ABOUT AGRILINK

Agrilink is a multi-actor project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. It brings together 16 partners from 13 countries, including universities, applied research institutes, advisors and consultants from public organisations, private SMEs, a farmer-based organisation and specialists in communication and distance learning.

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