

# Setting up a Learning Platform for Farmers' Access to Land

A survey of organisational needs

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*Agroecology farming in the Czech Republic © Kevin V. Ton*

# About the authors

This report has been written by members and partners of the Access to Land network, as part of a partnership focused on building the capacity, knowledge and practical tools of European initiatives working to secure land for agroecological farmers (*Erasmus + Strategic Partnership "Setting up a Learning Platform for Farmers' Access to Land", 2018-2021*).

The Access to Land network brings together grassroots organisations from across Europe to share experiences and promote the significance of access to land for agroecology and generational renewal in agriculture. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 15 organisations. The network's main objectives are to consolidate and disseminate initiatives on access to land and to put land issues in the spotlight. Furthermore, it organises information and experience-sharing, fosters cooperation between members, and facilitates broader communication.

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## Introduction

Across all of Europe, industrial farms keep getting bigger and more intensive while small scale, agroecological farming is declining. Small agroecological farms, however, are the only entities able to respond to increasing societal demands for local organic food, and climate- and biodiversity-friendly agriculture.

Grassroots initiatives across Europe work to help maintain peasant, small-scale agriculture and secure land for farmers upholding agroecological practices. The Access to Land network aims to provide the resources, tools and teachings that these initiatives need to support their actions. Between September and December 2018, some network members and partners developed a survey with the goal to better identify the needs of European groups dealing with the preservation and management of farmland for agroecological purposes.

The results of this survey will further guide the creation and capitalisation of resources to build the capacity, knowledge, and practical tools of European access to land initiatives. The present report summarizes the survey results obtained through the participation of 33 organisations from 13 different countries to the survey. It draws useful insight into the current status, challenges, and burning issues of European organisations working on land. Also, it outlines key areas in which our organisations should support each other.

## Methodology

In November - December 2018, an online questionnaire in English was sent to selected organisations working on access to land in Europe. We reached out to a large circle of members, partners, and contacts of our network, most of whom were grassroots groups and organisations working directly with farmers. We did not focus on other types of organisations and institutions dealing with land, e.g. churches, local authorities, etc.

This selection method introduced an inherent bias in the results presented in this report, since only organisations pertaining to a similar circle of partners answered the survey. Nevertheless, such bias is justified by the goal of our survey, which is not to paint a broad picture of access to land issues in the European Union (EU) but to get a better idea of pan-European grassroots needs for resources and tools to work on land.

The method of selection of survey respondents may also explain the fact that some countries are greatly represented, mostly in Western Europe, while only few Eastern European organisations were reached. Indeed, generally, work on land topics are newer in Eastern countries of the former Soviet bloc, while the geographic footprint of the Access to Land network remains heavier in North- and South-West Europe.

The questionnaire was composed of four parts, which focused on general information about organisations, capacity building needs, needs related to practical aspects of access to land work, and needs for learning resources.

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT ORGANISATIONS

### Overview

The questionnaire was completed by 33 respondents from 13 European countries (Table 1). The list of participating organisations with the acronyms of their names is included in the Appendix I. Most of them were from United Kingdom (8), Spain (6), Germany (7), France (2) and the Netherlands (2). For rest of the countries, only one organisation replied to the questionnaire.

#### Growing urgency since 2000

The oldest organisations working on farmland issues are situated in Spain (DIBA/BCN 1812, ATyN 1994, CERAI 1994), Germany (NABU, 1899), Netherlands (BD VER 1926, BD GRO 1978), United Kingdom (SFG 1985, RFT 1997) and Switzerland (SEM 1990). However, some of these organizations (mainly in Germany and Spain) have started working on land topics years after their creation,

Country	Number of responses
Austria	1
Belgium	1
Czech Republic	1
Denmark	1
France	2
Germany	7
Greece	1
Ireland	1
Romania	1
Spain	6
Switzerland	1
The Netherlands	2
United Kingdom	8

**Table 1: Responses according to countries**

and some do not have access to land as their main mission. For example, NABU has a long history as an environmental organisation. It was set up at the beginning of the 20th century and owns and manages land as a result of its environmental work. Five of the six Spanish organisations (DIBA, CERAI, XCT, ATyN and Rurbans) approach the topic of access to land as being related to their actions in other areas such as rural development, land conservation, young farmers training, etc.

The issue of access to land seems to have been growing in importance during the last 20 years, as 75% of the surveyed organisations were founded after the year 2000. Moreover, there is obvious need for action during the last five years as 16 new organisations were set up in Europe during this period. The need to address access to land has also been spreading to the former Eastern bloc states. For example, NPP was established in the Czech Republic in 2016 and ALPA was founded in 2018 in Romania.



**Agroecological farmer Lars Veraart presenting the new organization for access to land in Romania. © ALPA.**

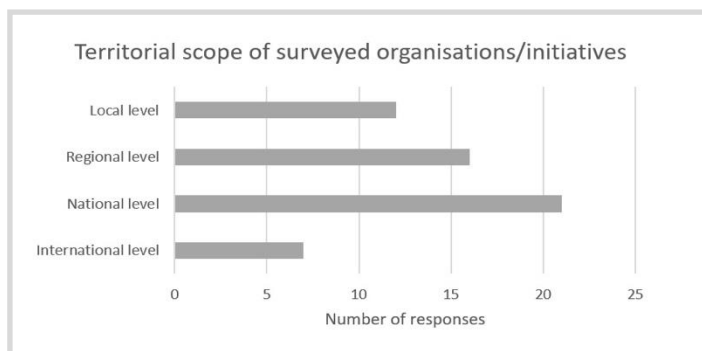


### Reasons for increasing interest in access to land issues

A variety of reasons explain rising interest in preserving farmland and facilitating land access for agroecological farmers in the EU. For instance, agricultural areas are shrinking due to urbanization and infrastructure projects. Also, land prices are rising as a result of increased competition and speculation. For instance, in Belgium, DLg is confronted with land prices rarely lower than €50,000 per hectare (ha). Land prices go up to €100,000 per ha or more when the land is located close to a city. This hampers access to land for new generations with little capital and means. Meanwhile, European farmers get older and a majority of them should retire in the coming years but lack the tools and support to ensure proper farm succession and survival of their small, independent businesses. In many EU countries, this situation demands new models of land ownership, land acquisition and new tools to help farmers and new entrants deal with difficulties. In Germany, for instance, many Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) projects attempt to connect with a new generation of young farmers and those who switch careers and do not have their own farmland.

Preservation and fair distribution of farmland is a global challenge, which explains why many organisations act at a local and international scope, such as TDL, ATyN, XCT, Rurbans, NABU, CERA, AEP. Others (NPP, ALPA) are directly connected with umbrella organisations cooperating on an international level (AMPI, Eco Ruralis) while they focus on issues in their countries.

Most often, however, organizations work at national (21) and regional (16) levels. In the United Kingdom, for instance, all organisations have a national scope apart from SFLT, which focuses on Scotland, and TGL, which operates at a local level in a specific part of South West England (the Tamar valley). In France, TDL is composed of 3 national structures and 20 regional associations that work throughout the French territory.



### Legal form

The legal forms of surveyed organisations greatly differ according to their goals, sources of funding, structure, future plans, and national laws. Most organisations (11) reported to be non-governmental organisations (NGO). Some organisations (7) chose more than one category or the option "Other" (10), because they did not fall into a single legal form proposed in the survey. For instance, TDL in France is composed of 3 types of entities (not-for-profit associations, a private company limited by shares - La Foncière -, and a land trust - La Fondation).

### Legal forms follow national laws

The final choice of legal form highly depends on the national legal frameworks, requirements, and fiscal laws. They affect land ownership regulations, donation collection, shareholding models and laws, etc. For instance, in Greece, an association needs a minimum of 20 members and a cooperative needs a minimum of 100 members. On the other hand, in Belgium or Spain, one can start an association or a cooperative with only 3 members. Some legal forms are

specific to certain countries (e.g. Community Benefit Society in the UK), others are more common (e.g. NGO, farmer organisation).

The diversity among legal forms of organisations also stems from the fact that “land issues” are a complex topic often tackled by organisations which deal with different environmental, social and economic aspects of agriculture. Such great number of legal forms can serve as an inspiration to establish new organisations in the EU. Nevertheless, legal structures shall not be viewed as an end in themselves, but rather as a vessel to support local actions.

#### **Case study: legal structures in the UK**

*The UK provides a good example of legal form diversity even within one country. Historically, there were two main legal forms to protect agricultural land: charity and cooperative (co-op). Whereas co-ops tend to be seen as more democratic, commercial and more suitable for shareholder investment, charities are viewed as traditional, altruistic and more suitable for public benefit. Moreover, being a charity has tax benefits for donors. Donating land or money to a charity is tax free and this can greatly reduce the tax due on any remaining assets of an estate. This encourages people to leave assets and/or money to a worthy cause rather than have the money taken in tax. Donating money to a charity under the gift aid scheme means the government will give 25% for every amount donated (25 pence for every £1) where the donor is a taxpayer.*

*In 2005, more innovative legal structures with a fundamental co-operative approach have been introduced: community interest companies (CICs) and community benefit societies (CBSs). Both have an asset lock, allow for one member one vote. The shares make them popular with social enterprises and community-based initiatives and those wishing to raise funds direct with the public. It may seem often overwhelming what type of legal form to choose for newly form initiative around access to land issues so sometimes is good to consult with experts prior to adopting a legal form, such as SFLT which undertook a consultation to learn the benefits in practice of the different organisation types and review what would best suit their purposes.*



#### **Case study: legal structures in Belgium**

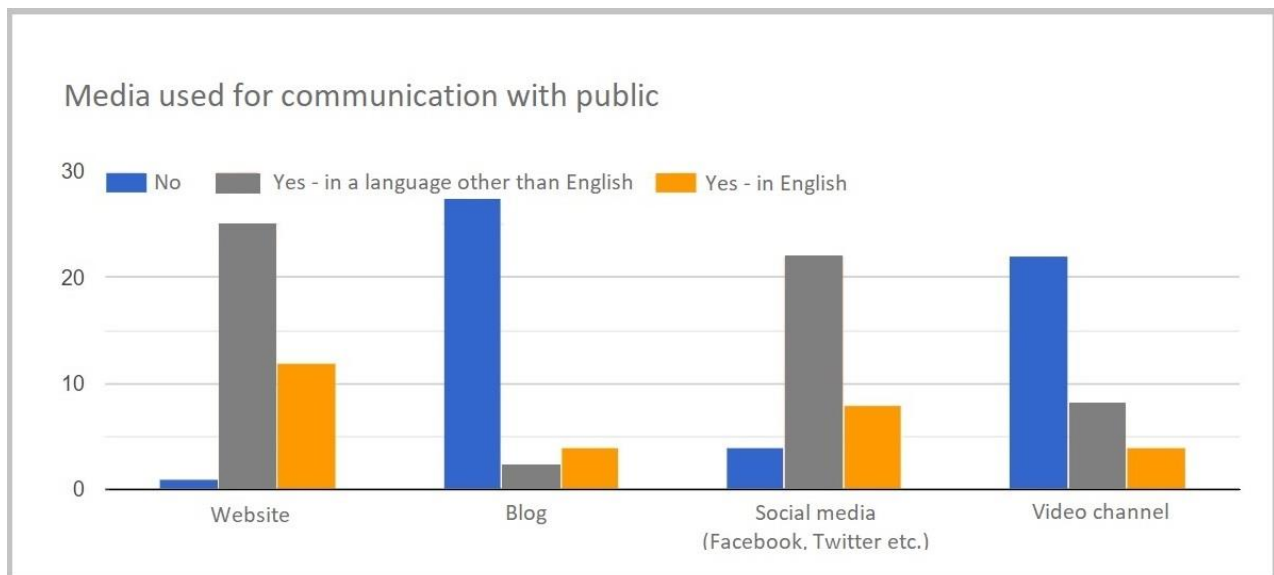
*There are two land initiatives active in Belgium, De Landgenoten (founded 2014) and Terre-en-Vue (founded in 2012). Both organisations focus on facilitating access to land for new entrants and farmers who are working according agroecological principles. They both do so by buying farmland and renting it out to the farmers. While Terre-en-Vue has a threefold legal form (non-profit association, cooperative, foundation), De Landgenoten limited itself to a cooperative and foundation. This variety in legal forms should be seen in the light of legislation and of maximization of financials means. A foundation helps one to get the most out of a gift, while a cooperative is ideal to engage citizens as shareholders. A non-profit association (or a foundation) is sometimes necessary to be able to receive subsidies from the government.*

## Communication with the public

Communication is an essential part of the work of European land initiatives, many of whom engage in raising awareness with different stakeholders. For presentation of main goals, all organisations (32) except one (IRLT) use websites. This is often associated with the use of other media to be more flexible and up-to-date: social networks, blog or video channels are a great way to share news, stories and events. It seems that the size of organisations impacts the way communication (the bigger ones having more tools for communication). However, savvy social media use can bypass lack of staff resource. In the UK for instance, none of the organisations currently have a dedicated communications officer (although some have had in the past) but many organisations use social media for outreach, especially when it comes to social, political and environmental topics. Social media pages are provided by all organizations (except four: SEM, SFLT, NPP, ALPA). Newsletters are used by several initiatives to keep the supporters regularly informed. Only 5 of 33 organisations use blogs. Although videos or video channels are considered effective communication tools, video-making is fairly high cost. Nevertheless, most German organizations use it as a tool to explain their model (e.g. RWAG) or for fundraising. A good example of video power is from Kulturland eG which recently managed to fundraise almost 1 million € over one month because of the successful crowdfund-campaign based on an 18 minutes video-documentary about the farm and campaign.



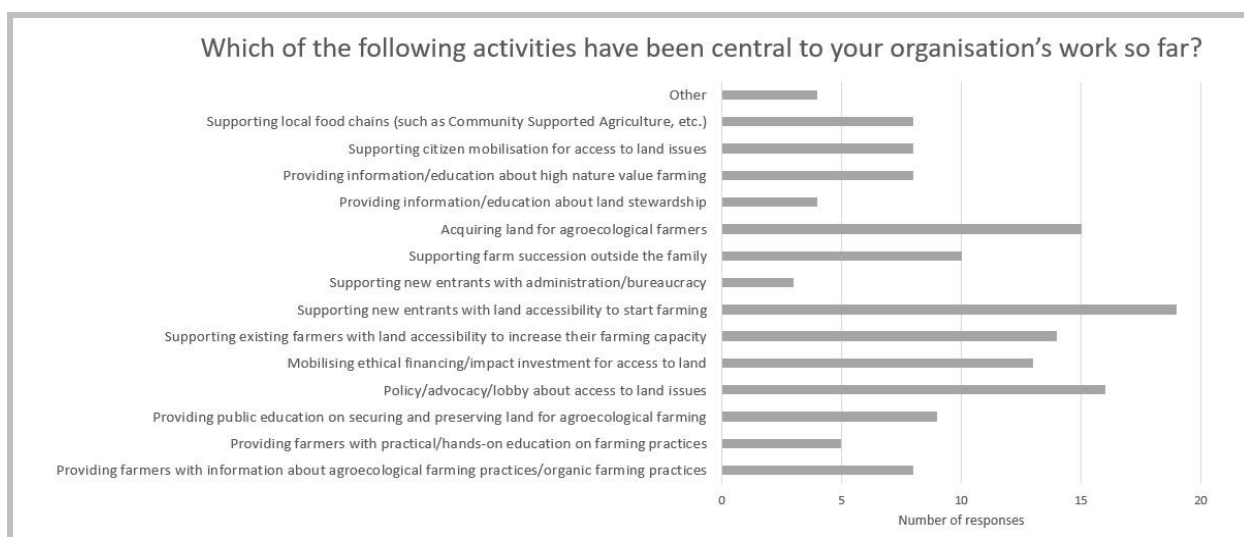
**TDL in France sends a bi-annual journal "Chemin de Terre" to its members, shareholders, donators, and farmers. © TerredeLiens**





## Central activities of surveyed organisations

Responses to the question “Which activities have been central to your organisation’s work so far?” illustrate the diversity of activities among surveyed organisation in the field of access to land. Supporting new entrants with land accessibility to start farming is the most important activity for 57,6 % surveyed organisations, which goes hand-in-hand with acquiring land for agroecological farmers (45,5 % respondents). In addition, almost half of the surveyed organisations (48,5 %) work on policy, advocacy and lobbying about access to land issues. In the UK, this activity plays an important role in organisations which are not land trusts and have developed a remit to undertake this work – e.g. RFT facilitates an All-Party Parliamentary Group on Agroecology and SFG lobbies the Welsh government. Additionally, SFLT – although a land trust – has done a lot of advocacy work with Nourish Scotland and the Scottish Parliament. Other land trusts work on this activity but alongside or secondary to their main aim of acquiring and holding land. Although there are many unifying activities, the local situation reflects a particular mission and different approaches the organisations take to access to land.<sup>1</sup>



## NEEDS FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

### Achievements

“What is our mission and vision? What do we want to achieve? What legal form is suitable for us? Who is in our core group?” These are the first important questions every organisation needs to solve when beginning to work on land issues. More than 70% of the surveyed organisations

<sup>1</sup>

In the UK, for example, ELC tackles the interrelated issues of access to land and (affordable) housing for new entrants. BDLT, through community engagement and multi-use enterprises, are creating rural job opportunities as well as increasing public awareness and direct engagement with the land and its enterprises.

legally established an organisation with a mission, vision and a core group to deal with land issues.



### Securing core funding: uneven levels of achievement

Only 16 of the respondents (48,5%) has found a stable way so far to finance their work and to pay staff. Figures seem to suggest that it is slightly easier to crowdfund for land: 17 initiatives report that they have already crowdfunded money to buy land. This may be explained by the fact that donating or buying shares for a specific farm is more appealing to the broader public than supporting financially the functioning of a land initiative. In Belgium for instance, crowdfunding is mainly organised locally, focused on the needs of the farmer. A certain sense of urgency makes it easier to convince citizens to buy one or more shares.

#### **Case study: securing core funding for the Nadace Pro Pudu (NPP) Foundation in the Czech Republic**

*NPP was established with the help of the biodynamic Bemagro farm. The Bemagro landowners wanted to "relieve their soil from the burden of private ownership". Originally they planned to establish a foundation just for their own land (i.e. to create something similar to Buschberghof in Germany) but then they got in touch with the CSA network, and agreed to help establish a Foundation with a broader scope to work on land in Czech Republic. The Bemagro landowners withdrew 200 ha from their 2000 ha farm and donated the land together with €20,000 to the NPP Foundation. This gift supported not only the establishment of a core group to start working on development of NPP but also it helped to buy land for another farmer.*

Organisations consisting of multiple entities may reflect different stages of development. In France, TDL regional associations' performance in securing core funding may depend on year of foundation, levels of regional or county subsidy, and other local economic, social and cultural differences. In Germany the "franchise" system of RWAG (all RWAGs share the same vision and financial as well as narrative model) and the national trust of RWAGs facilitates the networking and experience sharing between the regional entities. However, different regional entities represent different stages of development and experience. Start-up RWAGs are usually mentored by another regional, more experienced RWAG.

### Facilitating access to land through purchase and other means

Land purchase can be an important moment for organisations that have chosen this lever of action. Fourteen (42%) of all respondents already bought at least some land or a farm. This does not always correlate with levels of experience: only 6 of the 14 organisations that bought land consider themselves as experienced, while 7 see themselves as having moderate experience, and 1 as brand new. In the UK, only two of the organisations have bought land – ELC and BDLT – smaller scale holdings, financed by a mixture of shareholder and donor investment. SALT currently receives gifts of land either during a lifetime or left in a will and has 400 acres (162 ha) in its ownership with another 2000 acres (809 ha) pledged.

Acquiring land and renting it out to farmers is not the only way organisations facilitate access to land. Over half of organisations have, for instance, reported having served as intermediaries between landowners (private, institutional) and farmers to facilitate dialogue, transfer or rental of land. Another common achievement is public awareness: 76% of all respondents confirm having raised awareness on land issues through campaigning, media actions, events etc. Almost 40% of the surveyed organisations reported having undertaken other actions to realise their particular mission than those indicated in the questionnaire.



*DLg's awareness raising day © Johan Van Oekelen*

### Lack of strategic planning

Surprisingly there is a lower percentage of organisations (33,3 %) who created a strategic plan related to access to land. As we look at the results of the survey, we see that 17 initiatives did not yet find stable financial means to pay their staff. Despite this financially unsecure situation, 3 of them did make a strategic plan, while 14 did not. On the other hand, half of the initiatives that do have income to pay their staff, did succeed in making a strategic plan. These figures match with our experience: it is hard to prioritise planning compared to day-to-day issues in a situation where resources and capacities are missing. One of the outcomes of the 2018-2021 Erasmus

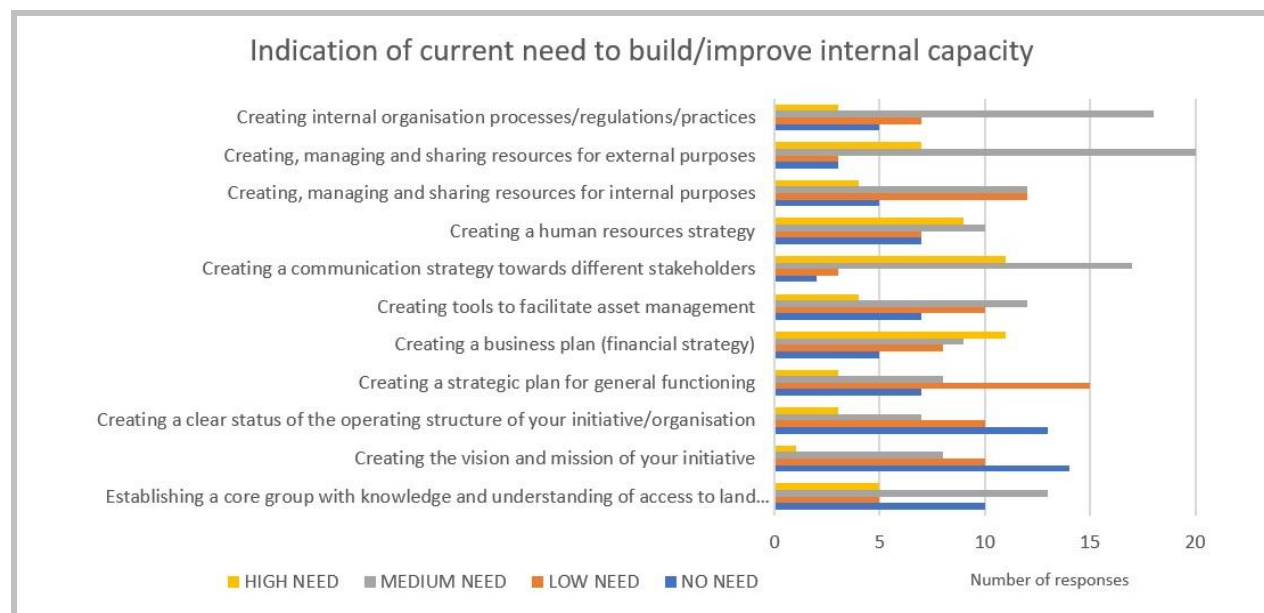
project could therefore be to assist partner organisations with strategic planning or to create broadly accessible tools to European land initiatives with strategic planning.

## Need for internal capacity improvement

For the parts of the survey assessing needs of organisations, respondents were asked to rank proposed options between “high need”, “medium need”, “low need”, and “no need”. Organisations were allowed to select a “high need” maximum three times. This implied they had to think carefully about their highest priorities, while other options (medium, low, no need) could be selected as many times as desired. We therefore interpreted the results by giving more weight to answers marked as “high need”.

### Important needs for financial, communication and human resources strategies

As already mentioned, only a third of surveyed organisations have created a strategic plan. Therefore it is not surprising high organisational need for creating a financial strategy (business plan) (11 high need, 9 medium need) and a communication strategy towards different stakeholders (11 high need, 17 medium need).<sup>2</sup> Although financial and communication strategies were the most important priorities identified in the survey, the need to manage staff efficiently was not far behind. Creating a human resources strategy is considered a high need by 9 and a medium need by 10 initiatives. There is also the need to create, manage and share resources for external purposes (7 high need, 20 medium need), which is related to the ability of effective communication outside the organisation.



<sup>2</sup> In the UK, where the greatest need shared among all organisations is for a communications strategy, a strong communications strategy often underpins a strong business plan – being able to engage with stakeholders in a meaningful way is critical to building relationships, progressing work well and securing funding.



## Need to reach stakeholders

To identify the main stakeholders that organisations want to approach in terms of exchanging knowledge and fundraising, the survey proposed a predefined list of stakeholders where each organisation could choose a maximum of 5 the most important.

### Wanted: farmers and landowners

Farmers and landowners are the important stakeholders that organisations want to reach to exchange information. They indeed play a central role in deciding who can take care of the land and how to do so. We can say that all type of farmers and landowners are prioritised: farming landowners (15 responses), non-operating landowners (12 responses), farmers nearing retirement (13 responses), active farmers as mentors for new entrants without experience (14 responses), and new entrants (14 responses). Although landowners (whether they are farmers or not) are key stakeholders to reach for securing land. This is a difficult task because they are often simply not aware of the existence of farming land trusts/land-based organisations and how collaboration can facilitate not only finding a tenant but also finding a new entrant or successor for the farm. In Germany, as in most EU countries, farm succession outside the family is still not very common. Pension is not sufficient, therefore, farmers are more likely to sell their farmland to the highest bid than transfer it to a young farmer with lower capital and means. Approaching retiring farmers and motivating them to support new entrants or to transfer their farms to access to land organisations is therefore an important task of all European land organisations, and a topic which could be addressed by a European partnership.



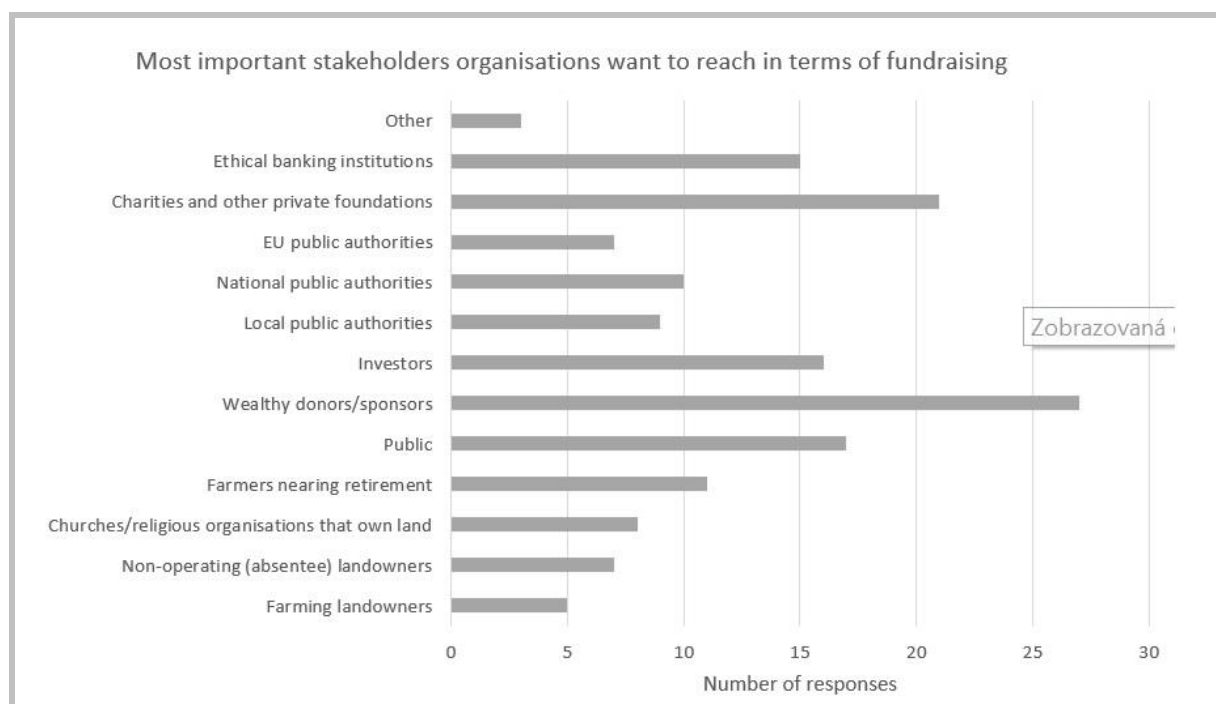
### Need for a change in policy

It is widely recognised that without changes in policy at all levels (from local to European) little will happen to encourage and support new entrants onto the land to create viable, sustainable farming businesses. Therefore, it is logical that policymakers are one of the most important group that organisations want to reach (15 respondents, 45,5 %). In some countries, municipalities and local authorities are an important stakeholder as they still own land. This is the case for Belgium:

as local food strategies start to be a frequent part of policy statements of cities and municipalities, how to manage the public land is becoming a topic of debate. Unfortunately, sometimes municipal land is being sold for profit to avoid budgetary deficit, without considering how a thought-out management plan of the farmland could help achieving several social, economic, and ecological goals. As farmers and citizens start to realise the opportunities, the first ever lawsuit is being filed against a Flemish city for selling a great amount of common land to a private company, thus favouring speculation by wealthy actors. In the UK as well, many local authorities have been heavily criticised for still owning farms and selling off farmland to plug financial deficits. Local authorities also approve housing planning applications. Greater engagement is needed to help the authorities understand the need for agricultural dwellings for new entrants and for them to see its positive impact. In Eastern Germany, state land is still sold to the farmer offering the best price and so-called “white land” (state-managed in terms of contracts and lease, but unclear ownership situation) are used to top up the annual county budget. The potential to facilitate new entrants and support established organic farms on state-owned or state-managed land is not being used but has been raised by German access to land organisations.

### Fundraising: how reach private capital?

The vast majority of surveyed organisations (27 respondents, 81,7 %) have selected wealthy donors/sponsors as a primary target for fundraising. In the UK, this type of funding is often seen as generous, fairly strings-free and can be quick despite the fact that reaching these stakeholders in a meaningful way is not always easy. In France, private philanthropy is still underdeveloped because the culture is dominated by the provision of social services by the state rather than by individuals. Nevertheless, there are growing private funding opportunities and organisations such as TDL are interested in developing strategies at national or regional levels to reach wealthy donors and sponsors. Similarly, charities and other private foundations are assumed to be important donors to reach for a great number of respondents (21 respondents, 63,6 %).



Finally, another important stakeholder to reach in terms of fundraising is the public (17 respondents, 51,5 %). This strategy presents the double advantage to help diversify sources of funding but also to involve citizens in supporting better farmland protection and management (as shown in the graph above, citizens are also seen as an important target audience to exchange information, and most probably, to raise awareness). In France, TDL has amassed support from over 25,000 citizens who are either donors, shareholders, adherent or volunteers for the movement.

## **Need for advocacy and lobbying capacity**

It seems that lobbying and advocacy touches almost all surveyed organisations, even those who do not have a specific advocacy/lobbying remit but wish to be involved in this activity in future in case they will have capacity. Only 3% of surveyed organisations indicate they have not engaged in lobbying and do not wish to do so in the future. In France, TDL considers itself rather new in advocacy/lobbying activities but has made great progress in recent years advocating at EU level through the Access to Land network (petition, contacts with members of parliament, etc.) and at national level where it works closely with several partners on a land law reform project. All organisations surveyed in the United Kingdom also wish to be involved in lobbying/advocacy. Paradoxically, Brexit and the agricultural bill consultations have advanced the inclusion of organisations taking a more agroecological approach round the political table. Gatherings such as the Oxford Real Farming Conference, organised by RFT, have attracted MPs and MEPs to learn more about smaller scale agroecological farming and have been hugely important to put agroecology forward. Some organisations are considering developing an Access to Land UK Network to unite and collaborate on advocacy and lobbying in particular.

In Germany, the recently created National Network for Land Conservation (Netzwerk Flächensicherung) provides a platform for access to land organisations to share experience and perform lobbying. In 2018 the platform organised its first federal conference, inviting political stakeholders to discuss the burning issues of access to land and new entrants. Presently the Netzwerk Flächensicherung is involved in the building of guidelines for local authorities to standardize decision procedures in land sales and to determine which external investor is most favourable to acquire farmland (distinguishing profit-driven and community-based investors such as access to land organisations).

## **NEEDS RELATED TO PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF ACCESS TO LAND WORK**

### **Obstacles to access land**

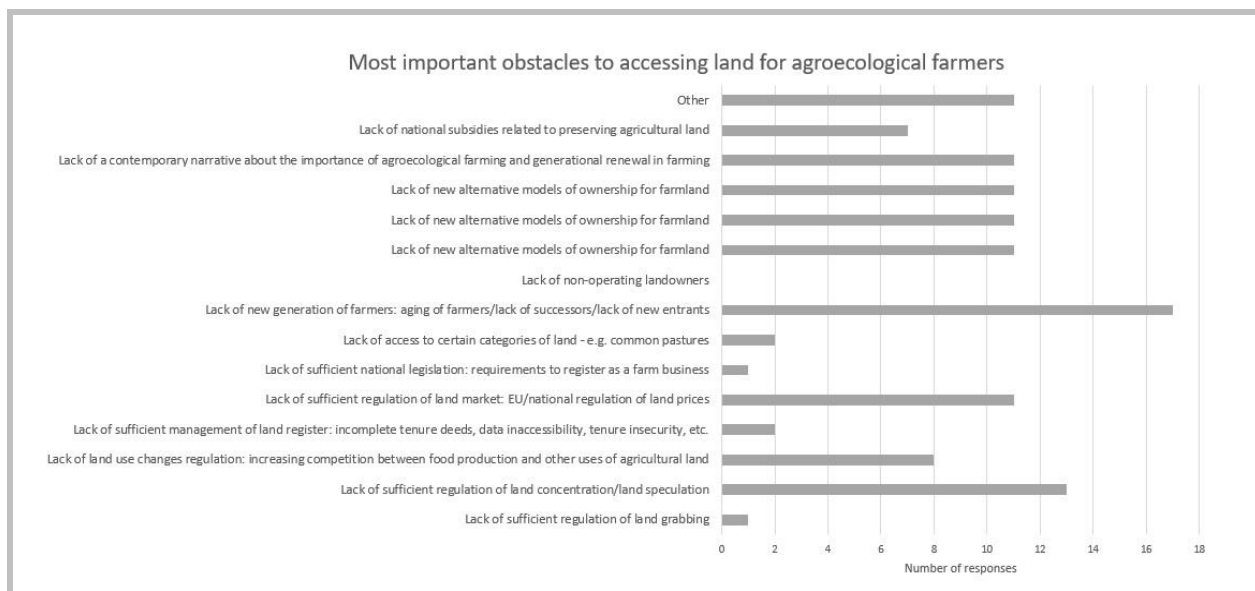
#### **Several, interrelated obstacles**

According to the surveyed organisations lack of new generation farmers (17 respondents, 51,5 %) is a key obstacle to their work. In Romania, only 3% of farmers are under 35. In Flanders, the average age of the Flemish farmer is 54 years. Only 13% of the 50+ farmers have a successor. Less than 10% of the farms is in the hands of a farmer younger than 40 years old, while more than 15% is managed by a 65+ farmer. In 10 years, the number of farms has decreased by a quarter.

In Germany, 70% of the farms with farmers over 45 had no successor in 2010. Farmers are generally very old compared to the other parts of the working population: 32% of the active farmers in Germany are over 55 years old, compared to 18% in the rest in the working population. Regarding generational renewal, almost all countries report a lack of mechanisms to support young and retiring farmers and high land prices as barriers to generational renewal.

The lack of sufficient regulation of land concentration/speculation (13 respondents, 39,4 %) and of EU/national regulation of land prices (11 respondents) are also the key obstacles. Romania and the Czech Republic are among the countries where the lack of regulation in the land market affects farmland prices, which are rising under high pressures (concentration, speculation, land grabbing). Moreover, in parts of the country, the agriculture land registry has incomplete information, and the property deeds are not up to date. Often land acquisition implies a complex and long legal procedure.

There are other frequently reported obstacles: lack of contemporary narrative about the importance of agroecological farming, generational renewal in farming (11 respondents), and lack of new alternative models of ownership for farmland (11 respondents). In the, UK as in many other countries, smaller scale, high value, mixed farming enterprises are still viewed as niche and sometimes not as 'proper' farming even though they may be supporting several livelihoods and be very successful. In Eastern Europe, it is often not well viewed to talk about land as a "common good", as it echoes times when communist regime forced collectivization of agriculture upon local people.



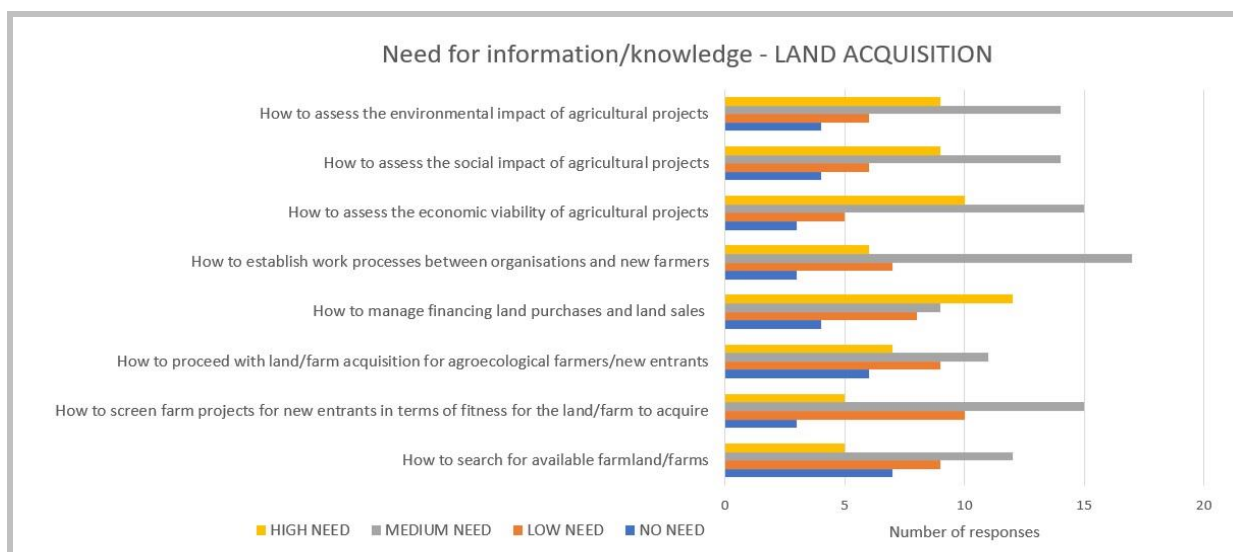
## Need for information and knowledge on land issues

Having assessed obstacles for access to land in their country, survey respondents were then asked about their need for information in specific areas such as land acquisition, facilitating contracts with farmers, land stewardship and facilitating generational renewal in farming.



### How to finance land and assess farm projects?

In the area of land acquisition, organisations reported most often a “high need” to gain knowledge to manage financing land purchases and land sales (12 respondents). Ability to assess the economic viability (10 respondents) and other aspects of agricultural projects (social, environmental) are identified as important as well, as it is critical for determining the capacity of farmers to make a living off of the land and to communicate positively to donors about the farms' impact. Those aspects go beyond the goal to acquire land.



For instance, in Spain, Rurbans are highly interested in obtaining a tool to evaluate economic viability and impact of agrarian projects to help its farmer trainees (but Rurbans is not interested in acquiring land). In general, a streamlined tool to assess diverse economic, social and environmental aspects of farms and farm projects would be helpful to organisations working on access to land, and potentially to new entrants as well.

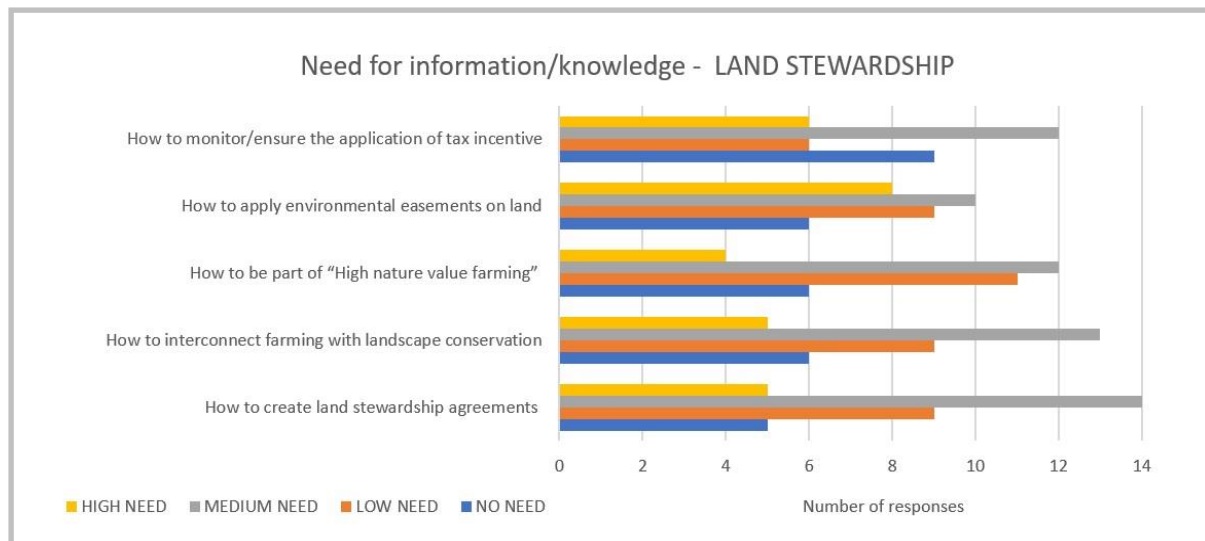
### Tenant farmers: what is the right contract?

The highest need for knowledge on contracting with farmers is related to ability to choose and create the right type of contracts between farmers and organisations (22 respondents with high or medium need). This is also related to the ability to select suitable candidate for farm tenancy, with adequate skills and experience to practice agroecological farming (21 respondents with high or medium need).



### Stewardship: how to establish environmental easements?

In the area of land stewardship respondents most often expressed a high need to gain knowledge about how to apply environmental easements on land. In general, however, it seems that organisations expressed a lower interest in gaining knowledge about environmental topics such as high nature value farming, land stewardship agreements, linking farming and landscape conservation. The concepts may not be well known or understood, or it may depend on the context and interests of local organisations. A specific resource could be created to popularize such practices and build bridges in the EU between organisations with goals to conserve nature and those aiming to facilitate agroecological farming. In the UK, an opportunity may come for organisations to become more involved in land stewardship and conservation. Change in law may allow positive covenants – i.e. agreements through which the land may not need to be acquired but can be effectively protected. SALT is hosting a roundtable to explore the impact and potential of covenants.

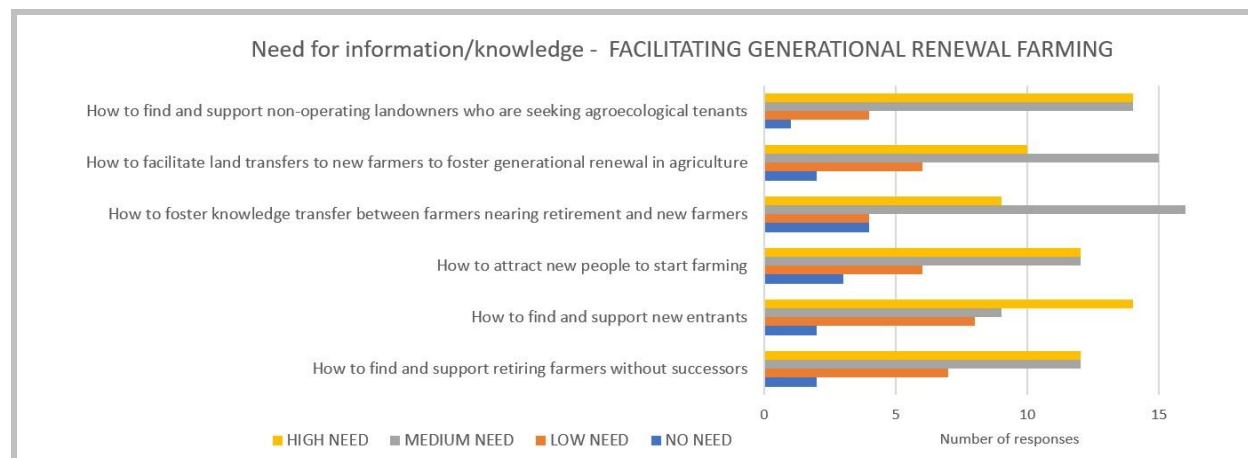


**Land stewardship project focused on combining extensive grazing with the conservation of semi-natural meadows and their floristic biodiversity © Paisatges Vius Association**

### Most important topic: generational renewal

According to survey results, there is high need among respondents for information on the topic of generational renewal in farming. This is not surprising as this is also identified as the key obstacle to preserve and promote sustainable farming.<sup>3</sup> Greece provides a good example of the variety of obstacles around generational renewal in farming. Farm succession in Greece may depend on the geographical area, on the kind of the agricultural production, and if there is any secure profit to be made on the farm. Land is usually divided between the farmers' children when he transfers it, which leads to fragmentation and abandonment of farms. Training options are also lacking in Greece for young farmers, especially if they wish to practice non-conventional agriculture. Due to the financial crisis, a lot of young people (under 35) have also been pushed to emigrate from rural areas to seek opportunities in cities or abroad. Finally, there is no research nor government support for land succession and generational renewal.

Among the most pressing questions identified by survey respondents in the area of generational renewal are: *"how to find and support new entrants?"* and *"how to find and support landowners who are seeking agroecological tenants?"*. Most organisations express a desire to match these categories of stakeholders to improve access to land for new farmers. Often however, they lack tools to effectively identify aspiring farmers and support them as well as to reach out to landowners and convince them to rent out or sell their land to agroecological farmers. Of course, retiring farmers are also an interesting group to reach to match them with new entrants. The creation of a matching platform has been experimented in some countries (Ireland, Austria, Germany) and could be an interesting line of action to explore, as well as the development of "farm succession cafés" (organising encounters between retiring and aspiring farmers), etc.



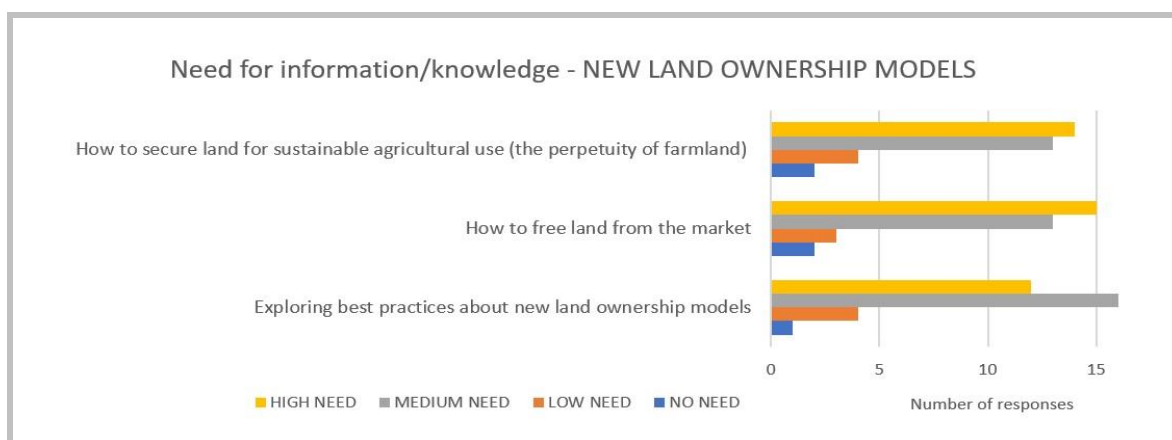
### New land ownership models: knowledge highly needed

Results show an overall high interest in the topic of new land ownership models. The goals vary: some organisation seek tools to free land from the market, preserve its agricultural use, ensure sustainable land management, or to uphold collective benefits from the land. In France and other countries, new land ownership models are increasingly a subject of research whether to unveil traditional practices of using farmland as commons or to find innovative ways to defend agricultural commons (through multi-stakeholder charters, innovative land investment mechanisms, etc.). There is a lack of overview for the best practices, the levers that may be

<sup>3</sup>

17 respondents, 51,5 % indicated that generational renewal was the main obstacle in their country.

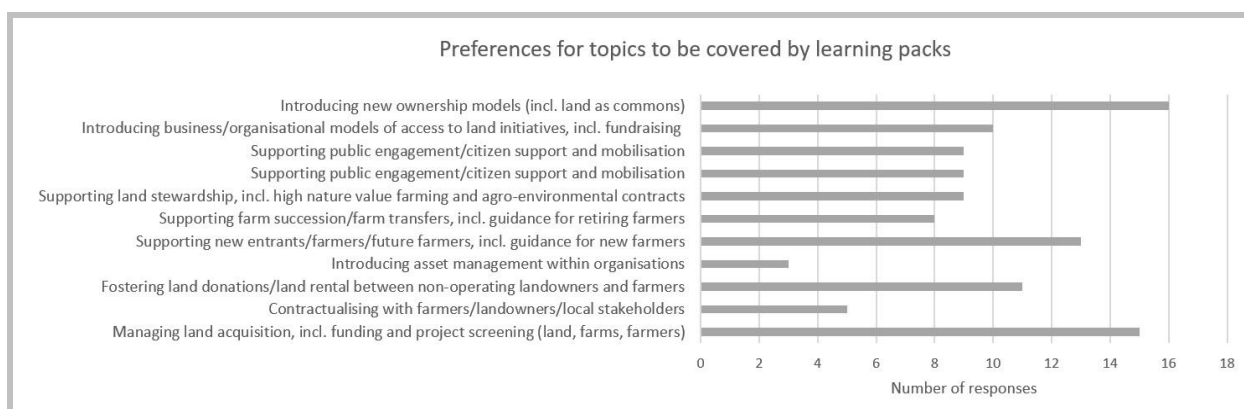
mobilised and the obstacles to anticipate in seeking to apply new land ownership models. Therefore, exploring best practices about the topic is needed.



## NEEDS FOR LEARNING RESOURCES

### Topics for learning packs

When specifically asked to indicate preferences for learning resources to be addressed in European learning packs, the respondents confirmed high priority for the topics of “*Supporting new entrants*” (13 respondents, 39,4 %) and “*Managing land acquisition, including funding and project screening*” (15 respondents, 45,5 %) and “*Introducing new ownership models, including land as commons*” (16 respondents, 48,5 %).



If we look at results on a national level, we can see that other topics are prioritised such as “*Supporting farm succession/farm transfers, incl. guidance for retiring farmers*” in Spain and Germany, or “*Supporting public engagement/citizen support and mobilisation*” in the United Kingdom. Despite the different approaches the organisations take, these answers echo the challenges faced by civil society organisations to tackle the issue of farm transmission and to challenge the all-powerful private property model





**Student at the School of Shepherd doing her internship with an old shepherd in Pallars Sobirà © Vanesa Freixa**

## Learning resources

In addition to creating learning resources, our network aims to compile and organise existing resources to make them available to land initiatives. Therefore, more survey questions asked respondents to identify available information. This helped point out potential “information gap” because almost 60 % (19 respondents) do not know about resources on the topic of “asset management”, and 50% do not know about resources on “land stewardship”, “contractualising with farmers”, and “managing land acquisition”.

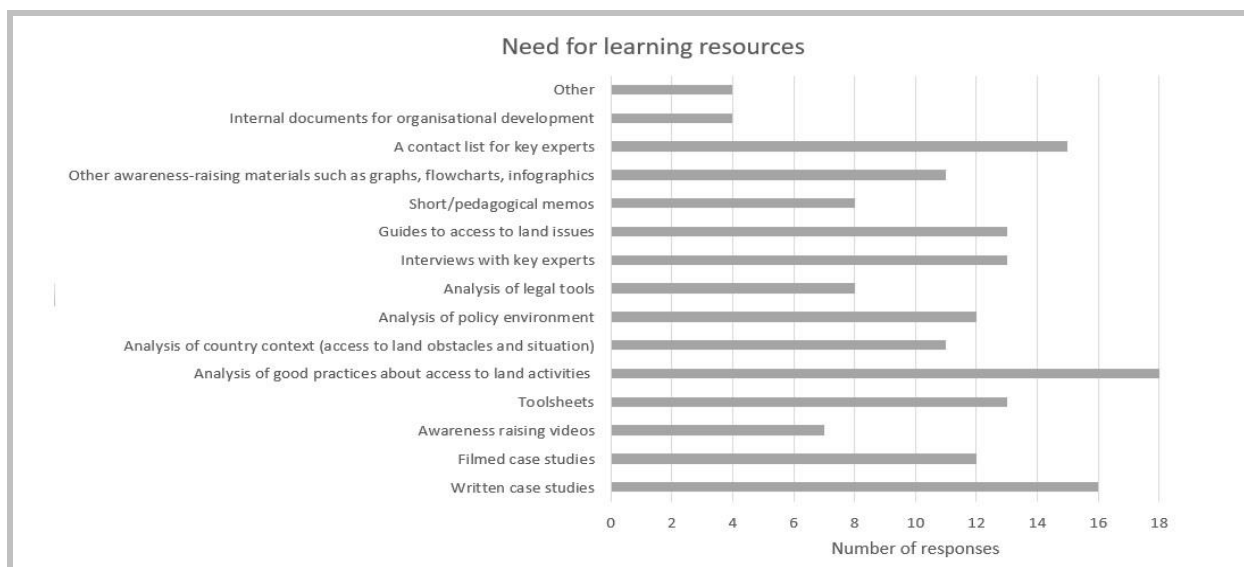


### Learning resources used in the past

Respondents were asked to choose 5 most important learning resources they used in the last 5 years to gain new information/knowledge about access to land issues. Written case studies (used by 26 respondents - 78,8 %) are the most common resource, as well as analysis of country context (60,6 %), analysis of good practices (48,5 %) and interviews with key experts (48,5 %). These types of information sources help to establish a “state of the art” policy environment and country context in which access to land organisations are growing, and to help them frame their action. Almost 40 % of respondents also reported they used “guides for access to land issues” which is a useful source especially for starting organisations. Finally, respondents who selected the category “other” reported workshops, seminars, conferences, visits and study meetings, which indicates that this kind of practical transfer of experience is an important part of the learning process and organisational development.

### Need for new learning resources

In categories of new learning resources, respondents selected that they would most appreciate development of good practices analysis (18 respondents, 54,5 %) and written case studies (16 respondents, 48,5%). Stories of success and examples of best practice can act as an exemplification to gain trust and confidence within organisations and with the public as they make access to land tangible. Network and practical tips matter too, with a high need expressed for a contact list of key experts (15 respondents, 45,5 %), interviews with key experts (13 respondents, 39,9 %), guides to access to land issues (13 respondents, 39,9 %), and toolsheets (13 respondents, 39,9 %).



### Conclusion

This survey reinforced our understanding of the problems and challenges facing access to land organisations in Europe. Its results will provide a solid basis to outline the topics of future learning resources, tools and teachings to be developed by the Access to Land network, especially in the frame of the 2018-2021 partnership to set up “a Learning Platform for Farmers’ Access to Land”.

The survey questionnaire prompted organisations to discuss internally about their most pressing needs. This laid the groundwork for different organisation to identify priorities and burning issues, which will be addressed through the implementation of a peer-to-peer mentoring programme between partners.

In addition, the survey prompted a reflection about the adequacy of pedagogical materials to address different topics. Indeed, while some issues such as farm succession are of interest to many organisations, solutions may depend on specific country laws about inheritance and farm transfers. Therefore, this question may be better addressed from a national perspective rather than from a European standpoint. The creation of other types of pedagogical tools, such as webinars and group trainings, is envisioned. Yet again, such tools should be matched with the most adequate topics: e.g. while all organisations may benefit from a webinar on challenges faced by new entrants in agriculture in Europe, a training may be more adequate when it comes to learning “how to talk to a retiring farmer” as it may include real-life practice exercises and exchanges about lived experiences of participants.

To conclude, with over half of organisations surveyed not having secured stable funding for staff, our survey made it appear crucial to provide knowledge about technical aspects of land work (acquisition, management, ownership models, etc.). It is needed to reinforce our organisations financially and internally to perform our work hand-in-hand with farmers and local stakeholders. Helping land initiatives emerged and consolidated is precisely the value-added of a network such as Access to Land. Resources should therefore also be provided to organisations who need to improve business plans, fundraising, core group buildings, communication strategies, etc.

## Appendix I. Organisations Surveyed

Name	Acronym	Foundati on	Country	Website & social media link
Agroecopolis	AEP	2017	Greece	<a href="http://www.agroecopolis.org">www.agroecopolis.org</a>
ALPA - Acces la Pamant pentru Agroecologie	ALPA	2018	Romania	<a href="http://www.acceslapamant.ro">www.acceslapamant.ro</a>
Asociación Trashumancia y Naturaleza	ATyN	1994	Spain	<a href="http://www.pastos.es">www.pastos.es</a> facebook.com/TrashumanciayN
Associació Rurbans	Rurbans	2009	Spain	<a href="http://www.escoladepastorsdecatalunya.cat">www.escoladepastorsdecatalunya.cat</a>
Associació Terra Franca	Terra Franca	2013	Spain	<a href="http://www.terrafranca.cat">www.terrafranca.cat</a>
Barcelona Provincial Council/ BCN Smart Rural Project	DIBA /BCN	1812	Spain	<a href="http://www.diba.cat/en/web/incendis/slides">www.diba.cat/en/web/incendis/slides</a>
Biodynamic Land Trust	BDLT	2011	United Kingdom	<a href="http://www.biodynamiclandtrust.org.uk">www.biodynamiclandtrust.org.uk</a> @BDLandTrust
Centro de estudios rurales y agricultura internacional	CERAI	1994	Spain	<a href="http://www.cerai.org">www.cerai.org</a>
Danmarks Økologiske Jordbrugsfond	DØJ	2016	Denmark	<a href="http://www.jordbrugsfond.dk">www.jordbrugsfond.dk</a>
De Landgenoten cvba-so	DLg	2014	Belgium	<a href="http://www.delandgenoten.be">www.delandgenoten.be</a>
Ecological Land Cooperative	ELC	2007	United Kingdom	<a href="http://ecologicaland.coop">ecologicaland.coop</a>
Kulturland eG	KL eG	2013	Germany	<a href="http://www.kulturland.de">www.kulturland.de</a>
Landgilde	LG	2013	The Netherlands	<a href="http://www.landgilde.nl">www.landgilde.nl</a>
LURZAINDIA	LURZAINDIA	2013	France	<a href="http://lurzaindia.eu">lurzaindia.eu</a>
Nadace Pro půdu (Foundation for Soil)	NPP	2016	Czech Republic	<a href="http://www.nadacepropudu.cz">www.nadacepropudu.cz</a>
Naturschutzbund Deutschland	NABU	1899	Germany	<a href="http://www.nabu.de">www.nabu.de</a>
Netzwerk Existenzgründung in der Landwirtschaft	NEL	2013	Austria	facebook.com/ExistenzgruendungLandwirtschaft
Ökonauten eG	ÖKO eG	2015	Germany	<a href="http://www.oekonauten-eg.de">www.oekonauten-eg.de</a>



Real Farming Trust	RFT	1997	United Kingdom	<a href="http://www.campaignforrealfarming.org">www.campaignforrealfarming.org</a> <a href="http://www.agroecology-appg.org">www.agroecology-appg.org</a>
Regionalwert AG Berlin-Brandenburg	RWAG BBG	2018	Germany	<a href="http://www.regionalwert-berlin.de">www.regionalwert-berlin.de</a> facebook.com/regionalwert.berlin
Regionalwert AG Bürgeraktiengesellschaft in der Region Freiburg	RWAG Freiburg	2006	Germany	<a href="http://www.regionalwert-ag.de">www.regionalwert-ag.de</a>
Regionalwert AG Hamburg	RW AG HH	2014	Germany	<a href="http://www.regionalwert-hamburg.de">www.regionalwert-hamburg.de</a>
Regionalwert AG Rheinland	RWAG RL	2016	Germany	<a href="http://www.regionalwert-rheinland.de">www.regionalwert-rheinland.de</a> facebook.com/regionalwert.rheinl& www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9iP-- Q45eY
Scottish Farm Land Trust	SFLT	2014	United Kingdom	<a href="http://www.scottishfarmlandtrust.org">www.scottishfarmlandtrust.org</a>
Shared Assets	SA	2011	United Kingdom	<a href="http://www.sharedassets.org.uk">www.sharedassets.org.uk</a>
Social Farms and Gardens (UK)	SFG	1985	United Kingdom	<a href="http://www.farmgarden.org.uk">www.farmgarden.org.uk</a> facebook.com/farmgarden.wales facebook.com/farmgarden.UK
Soil Association Land Trust	SALT	2007	United Kingdom	<a href="http://www.soilassociation.org/the-land-trust">www.soilassociation.org/the-land-trust</a> facebook.com/soilassociation
Stiftung Edith Maryon	SEM	1990	Switzerland	<a href="http://www.maryon.ch">www.maryon.ch</a>
Stichting BD grondbeheer	BD GRO	1978	The Netherlands	<a href="http://www.bdgrondbeheer.nl">www.bdgrondbeheer.nl</a>
Tamar Grow Local CIC	TGL	2007	United Kingdom	<a href="http://www.tamargrowlocal.org">www.tamargrowlocal.org</a>
Terre de Liens	TDL	2003	France	<a href="http://www.terredeliens.org">www.terredeliens.org</a> twitter.com/terredeliens?lang=fr facebook.com/terredeliens vimeo.com/226440713
The Irish Regenerative Land Trust	IRLT	2018	Ireland	<a href="http://www.aae.ie/irlt">www.aae.ie/irlt</a> mobile.twitter.com/tirlt?lang=en facebook.com/groups/19243339245 27282
Vereniging voor Biologisch-Dynamische Landbouw en Voeding	BD VER	1926	The Netherlands	<a href="http://www.bdvereniging.nl">www.bdvereniging.nl</a>
Xarxa de Custòdia del Territori	XCT	2003	Spain	<a href="http://www.custodiaterritori.org">www.custodiaterritori.org</a> twitter.com/xctcat