

# Young farmers' needs in Romania

Annex I.23 to the Pilot project: Exchange programmes for young farmers

Client: European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development

Rotterdam, 25 September 2015





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Rotterdam, 25 September 2015

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# 1 Introduction

## Objective of the Pilot Project study on young farmers

The “Pilot Project: Exchange programmes for young farmers” has been commissioned by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) to identify the needs of young farmers, get an overview of the existing exchange schemes for young farmers and develop a guide to establish or improve exchange schemes for young farmers (DG AGRI, Tender No AGRI-2012-Eval-03). The study has been implemented by Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte in 2014-2015. The aims of this study were:

- To provide a comprehensive assessment of the specific *needs of young farmers* across the EU;
- To describe and access existing schemes and initiatives for the exchange of young farmers;
- To identify specific results of exchange schemes and specific support measures that have proved to be effective and efficient;
- To provide recommendations on the design, implementation and delivery of exchange programmes and schemes.

## This country report on the needs of young farmers

The needs analysis was performed through desk research, interviewing on average 78 farmers per EU Member State and having a focus group in each of the 28 Member States. In the focus group the results of the interviews and the needs of young farmers concerning exchange schemes were discussed.

This report contains the needs analysis for **Romania**, and contains:

- General information on young farmers (chapter two);
- The needs of young farmers (chapter three);
- The needs regarding learning and communication (chapter four);
- The hindrances in obtaining information (chapter five);
- Sustainability of the exchange schemes (chapter six);
- The focus group participants (chapter seven).

The report is targeted at policy officers and other stakeholders interested in getting an insight into the needs of young farmers.

## Where to find more information

The following documents can be found on the DG AGRI website:

- The 27 other country reports on the needs of young farmers;
- The Analysis on the needs of young farmers (report I);
- The Inventory and Analysis of exchange schemes for young farmers in EU-28 and a selected number of OECD countries (report II). Together with contact details of around 200 exchange schemes and case studies of 22 exchange schemes;
- A guide for successful exchange schemes for young farmers (report III).

All reports can be found at: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/external-studies/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/external-studies/index_en.htm).





## 2 Activities of young farmers

In the interviews, the young farmers were asked the following details, among others. Indicated in the table below are:

- The mean age of the interviewed young farmers;
- The % of young farmers with a Bachelors (BSc), Masters (MSc) or PhD;
- The mean hectares of Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) that the respondents own or rent;
- The mean hectares of forestry that the respondents own or rent;
- The % of respondents that indicate that their farm is located in a favourable or less favourable area;
- The % of young farmers with organic farms.

**Table 2.1 Some general features of interviewed young farmers (YF) in Romania**

	Romania	n	EU-15 <sup>1</sup>	n	new MS <sup>2</sup>	n	EU-28 <sup>3</sup>	n
Age (mean (std))	31.2 (5.1)	101	29.4 (6.0)	1 241	29.4 (6.0)	840	29.4 (6.0)	2 081
% YF with high vocational education (BSc, MSc, PhD)	69.3	101	44.8	1 332	42.5	873	43.9	2 205
Ha UAA owned (mean (std))	17.5 (56.1)	101	77.7 (309.3)	1 138	51.9 (165.5)	778	67.2 (260.9)	1 916
Ha UAA rented (mean (std))	15.5 (43.7)	101	56.7 (156.2)	1 097	49.5 (157.5)	761	53.7 (156.7)	1 858
Ha forestry owned (mean (std))	0.1 (0.2)	101	20.7 (106.7)	954	5.4 (22.9)	679	14.4 (83.2)	1 633
Ha forestry rented (mean (std))	0.0 (0.0)	101	2.5 (20.9)	874	1.3 (25.3)	636	2.0 (22.9)	1 510
% favourable area	53.5	101	47.4	1 332	50.2	873	48.5	2 205
% less favourable or highly unfavourable area	44.6	101	43.3	1 332	42.4	873	43.0	2 205
% YF with organic farms	11.9	101	15.2	1 331	11.8	873	13.8	2 204

Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

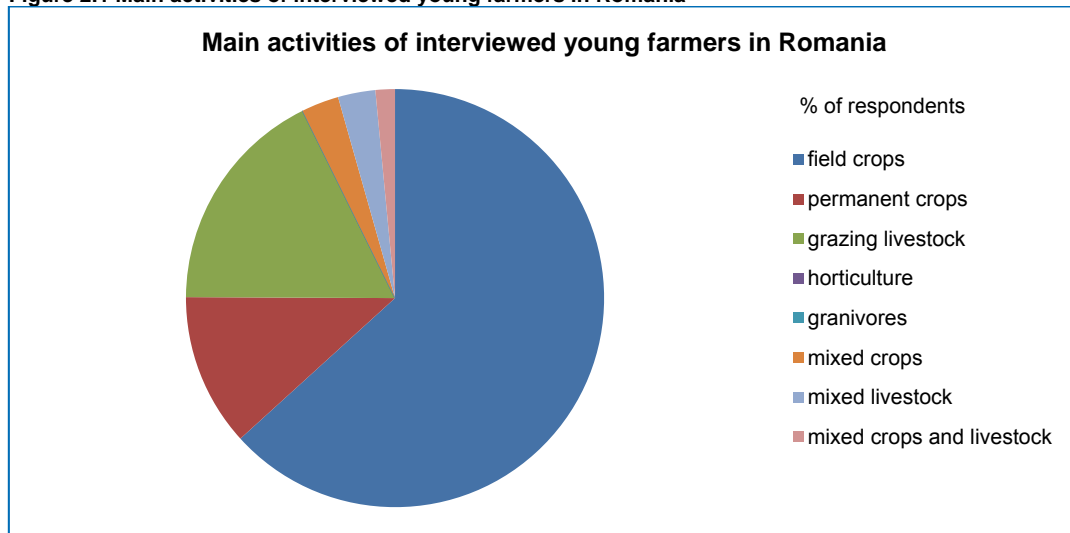
\* n = the number of people that were interviewed in respectively Romania, EU-15, new Member States and EU-28.

<sup>1</sup> EU-15 are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> New Member States are the countries who joined the EU in or after 2004: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

<sup>3</sup> EU-28 are all Member States, both EU-15 and new Member States.

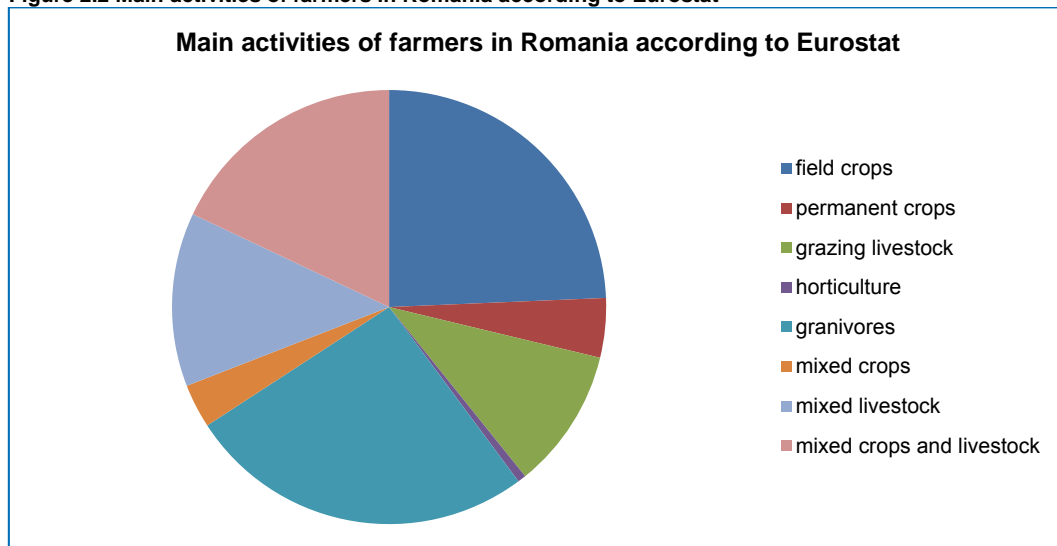
**Figure 2.1 Main activities of interviewed young farmers in Romania**



Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

The figures above and below highlight the difference between the main activities of young farmers that have been interviewed and the main activities of farmers in general as included in the Eurostat statistics.

**Figure 2.2 Main activities of farmers in Romania according to Eurostat**



Source: Farm Typology in 2010 according to the Agriculture, forestry and fisheries statistics of Eurostat (2013 Edition).

## 3 Needs of young farmers

The needs of young farmers have been identified through, among others:

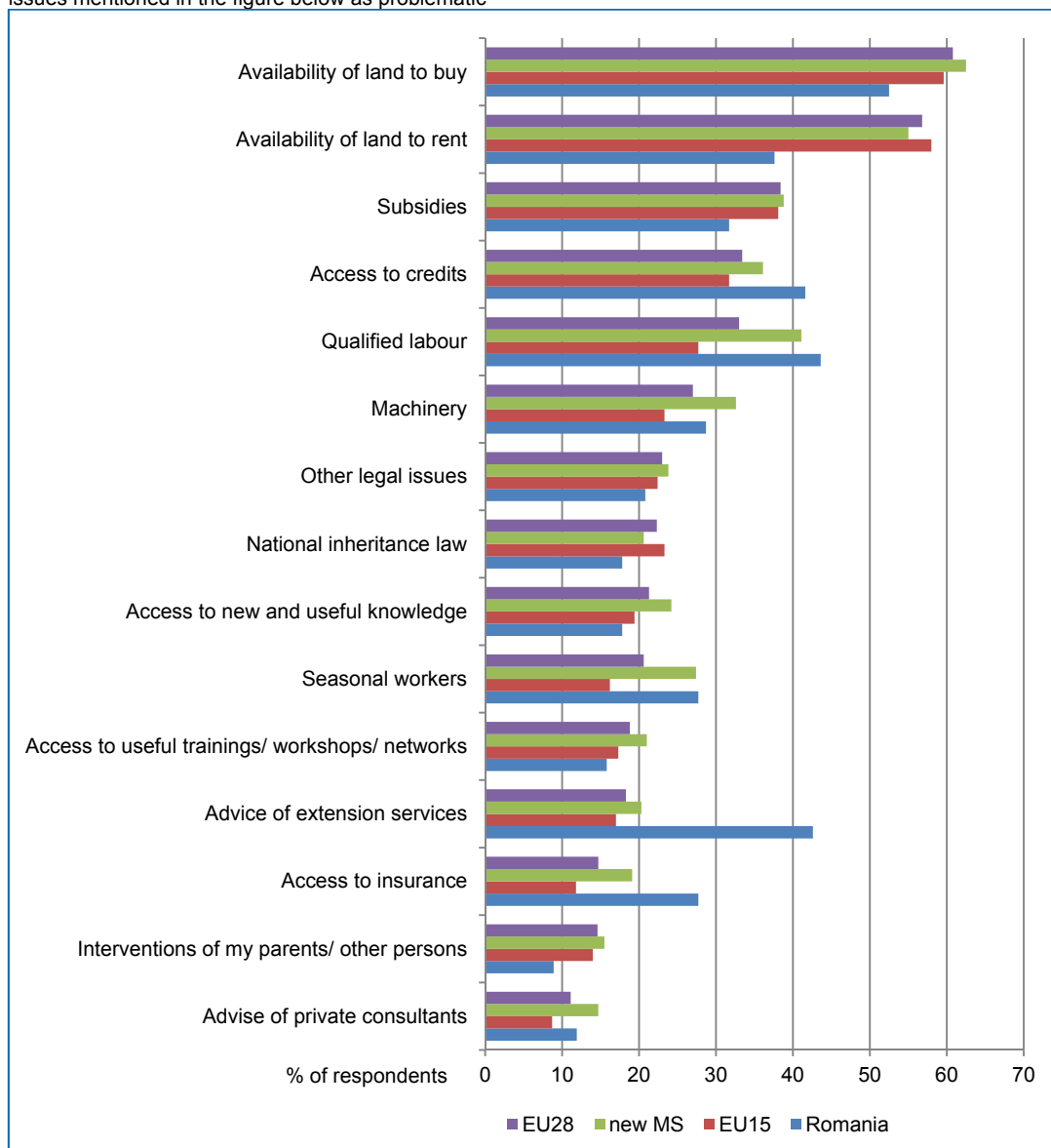
1. Which issues they perceive as problematic, e.g. the possibility of buying land, having access to credit, having the right machinery, having seasonal workers, etc.
2. Which knowledge needs the young farmers have.

### 3.1 Challenges for young farmers

The interviewed young farmers were asked which issues they perceive as problematic. This is shown in the figure below.

**OUTCOME:** The availability of land to buy or to rent and the availability of subsidies seem to be less problematic for the interviewed young Romanian farmers than for other young farmers in the EU. Access to credit, qualified labour, advice of extension services and access to insurance seem to be more important bottlenecks.

**Figure 3.1 General needs of young farmers** – percentage of interviewed young farmers who perceived the issues mentioned in the figure below as problematic



Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

The general conclusion of the **focus group** was that the survey captured the needs of the young farmers in Romania well.

The differences highlighted in the survey results between the opinions of Romanian young farmers and young farmers from other countries have been to a large extent confirmed by the participants of the focus group and explained through their own experiences and nuanced. They shared the opinion that the most important need for young farmers is for funding for farming activities, including both access to subsidies/grants and access to loans. The need for subsidies reflected in the survey is lower than the real need in the opinion of the participants. The survey revealed a high level of needs related to qualified labour, seasonal work and machinery, which were confirmed as well.

A third category of needs perceived high by respondents and higher than in other Member States is related to access to services, advice, counselling and insurance. The needs were confirmed by the participants. Availability of land to buy is also a strong need, a large number of respondents indicated this need although it is lower compared to other Member States.

According to the focus group, most needs of the Romanian young farmers are covered. There are a number of more general needs – to some extent contextual factors – influencing young farmers' activities or projects:

- The focus group participants indicated the need to ensure attractive living conditions in rural areas so that farming and living in rural areas is an attractive option for young people;
- A more effective vocational education system could ensure the qualified labour force required for farming;
- The third issue is linked to the banking system which should develop more targeted and accessible products to farmers in general and particularly to young farmers;
- The participants considered that the survey does not reflect accurately the high need of young farmers (and of farmers in general) of funding. The need for better access to funding is greater than the results of the study. The results of the survey could have been distorted by the fact that a high proportion of the participants are applicants to the National Rural Development Programme (NRDP) (2007-2013), and for this reason they have been in contact with funding opportunities and are more positive about this than other farmers;
- The high need regarding the access to insurance was confirmed by participants. Insurance in agriculture is a key gap in Romania that affects young farmers too. The Managing Authority for NRDP will fund/support better access to insurance in the 2014-2020 programming period;
- The need for counselling services has been confirmed by participants. The consultancy market is developing and the quality of consultancy services still has to be improved. Farmers are not experienced in working with consultants and the cooperation between them is not effective in many cases;
- The need for a qualified labour force was confirmed and explained by the fact that the vocational school system is weak and does not cover farming qualifications. In fact this is a weakness of the entire vocational education system in Romania;
- The conclusion regarding the lack of available land has to be nuanced. In the survey availability of land was perceived by Romanian farmers at a high level (although lower than the average of other EU member states). The participants highlighted that buying land could have constraints on the young farmers due to increased prices and to an increase interest of investors. For this reason, extending farms could be difficult. However there is sufficient room for young farmers to develop farming activities in the current conditions;
- In the opinion of the participants there are not significant differences between the needs of farmers in general and the needs of young farmers; however it should be noted that there is a large number of young farmers in rural areas who need support to develop farming activities. They should be considered by NRDP the same as the young people in urban areas and supported to settle in rural areas and develop farming activities. The advantage of young farmers is that they are dynamic and eager to learn which confirms the results of the survey regarding the interest to participate in exchange programmes.

According to the focus group, the needs of the young farmers are not specifically addressed in Romania. The support programmes and associations address the needs of the farmers in general. The participants mentioned one initiative to create an association of young farmers, but it was not viable and it is no longer active. Nevertheless NRDP 2007-2013 included one measure dedicated to young farmers but it was not designed specifically for knowledge and skills development; it was designed with the aim of encouraging and supporting young people to settle in rural areas for farming. NRDP funded training programmes that included visits to farms and practical skills modules but did not include exchange programmes. The opinion of the participants was that there is room for improvement regarding the effectiveness of training for farmers.

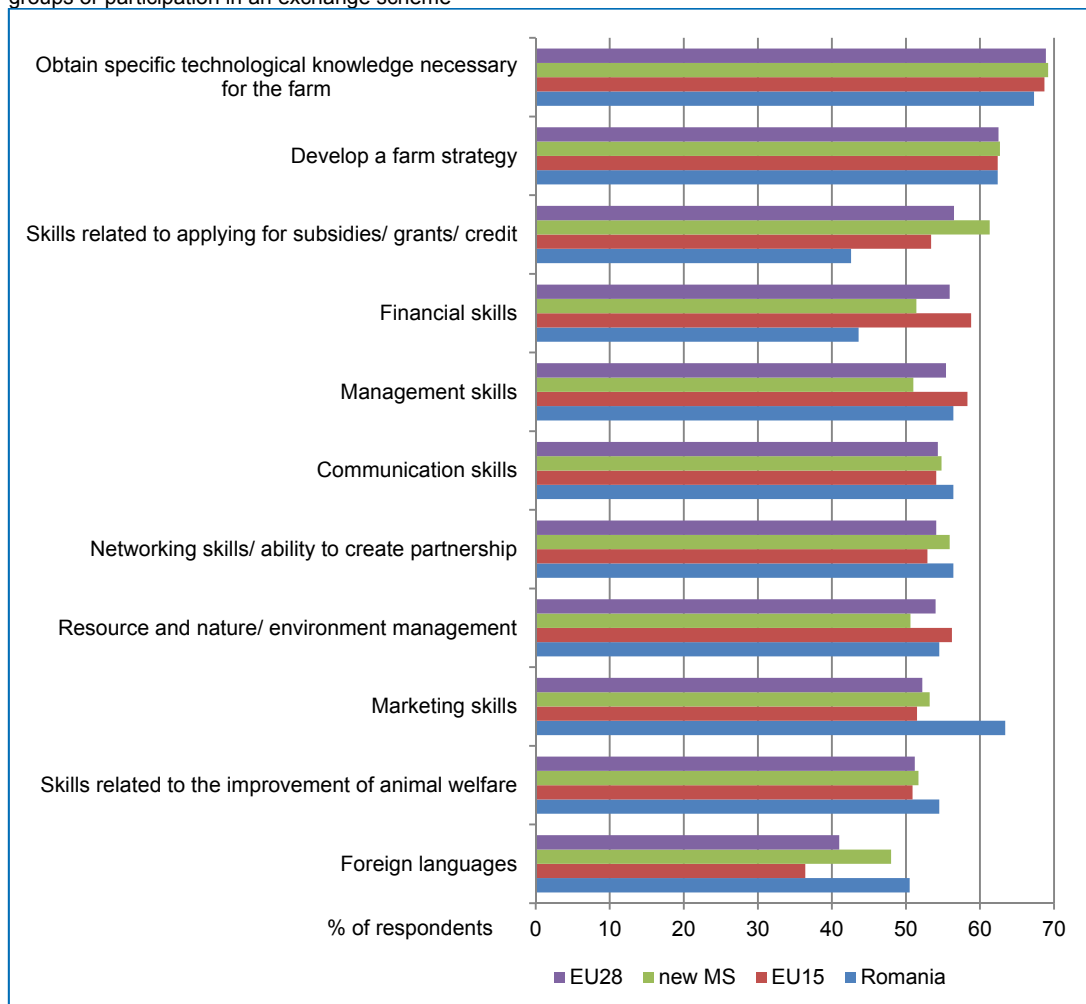
No particular regional differences have been highlighted. Young farmers from more isolated areas have additional constraints in terms of accessing services, sources of information and programmes and specifically tailored measures should address their needs.

### 3.2 Knowledge needs of young farmers

The interviewed young farmers were asked how likely it is that they will develop the skills mentioned in the table below through trainings, courses, workshops, study groups or participation in an exchange scheme. The results are included in the figure below.

**OUTCOME:** Most knowledge needs of the interviewed young Romanian farmers seem to be in line with those of their peers in other EU countries. However, compared to their peers in the EU and new Member States, they perceive it more likely that they will develop management skills and less likely that they will develop skills related to applying for subsidies and grants and financial skills.

**Figure 3.2 Knowledge needs of young farmers** – percentage of respondents who answered that it was likely that they will develop the skills mentioned in the table below through trainings, courses, workshops, study groups or participation in an exchange scheme



Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

According to the **focus group**, the main explanation for the results of the interviewed young Romanian farmers is the fact that they prefer interactive and more practice-oriented methods. It seems that the classical training methods do not always succeed in providing them with the expected practical skills.

In addition the focus group participants confirmed that knowledge and skills related to technology, marketing, management and farm strategy which have been indicated as being important by more than 60% of the respondents are the most important for the viability of the farm. This category of needs is followed closely by communication, networking, foreign languages, resource management and animal welfare related skills needs.

The skills related to subsidies, grants, credit and financial management are ranked lower in the range of skills needs according to the survey responses. However, according to the focus group participants important gaps exist in the financial skills of farmers. These are not acknowledged sufficiently, but there is evidence that this weakness is preventing the development of viable projects.

The participants highlighted the importance of including all forms of training and learning methods in developing practical skills: practice at other farms, visits, sharing experience. Recent experience proved that although current training programmes include such a component this is not effectively implemented and the participants do not get the expected benefits. There is a lot of room for improving the practical skills development methods and programmes.





## 4 Needs regarding learning and communication

Young farmers were asked about their needs regarding learning and communication:

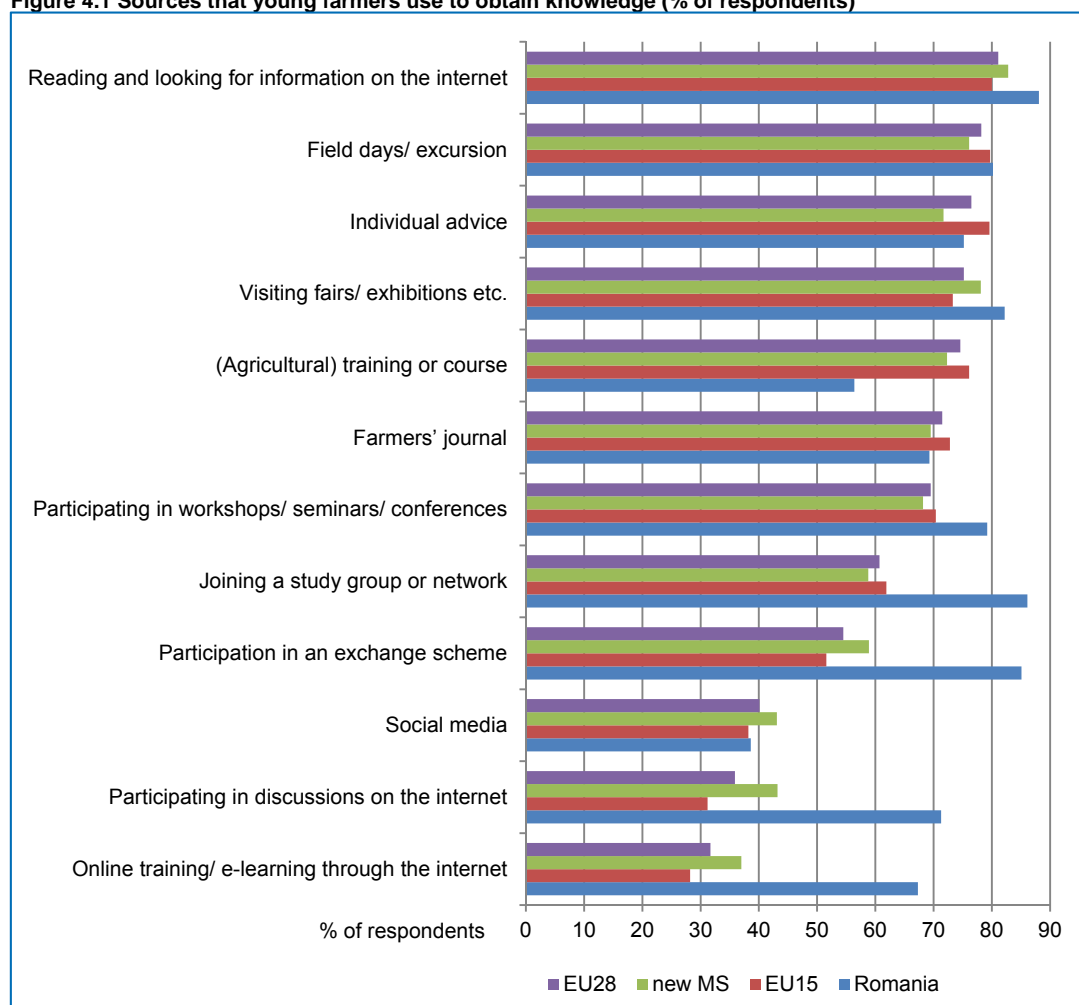
- Through which sources do young farmers like to obtain knowledge?
- Which persons or institutions are information sources for young farmers?

### 4.1 Most used information sources

The interviewed young farmers indicated that the following sources were most used for obtaining knowledge.

**OUTCOME:** Compared to their peers, the interviewed young Romanian farmers seem to use a wider range of sources to obtain knowledge. This is especially relevant for study groups and networks, workshops and seminars, exchange schemes, discussions on the internet and online training and e-learning through the internet. Agricultural courses or trainings seem to be less interesting to them.

**Figure 4.1 Sources that young farmers use to obtain knowledge (% of respondents)**



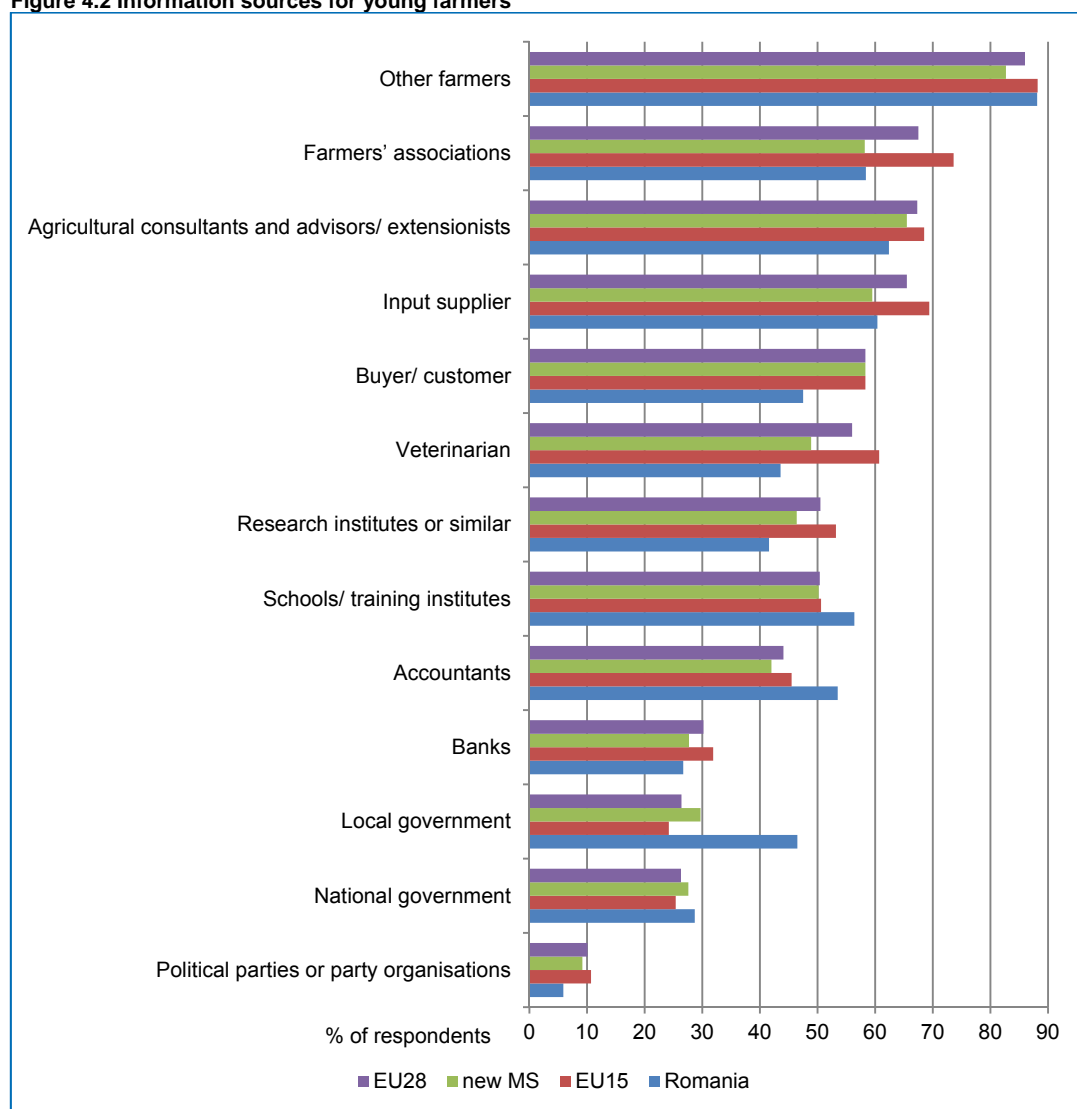
Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

## 4.2 Young farmers obtaining information from people and institutions

The interviewed young farmers were asked from which people and institutions they obtain knowledge. The figure below presents an overview.

**OUTCOME:** The use of information sources by the interviewed young Romanian farmers seems to be more or less in line with that of their peers in other EU countries. They however seem to use local government, accountants and training institutes more as an information source than their peers in other EU countries. They use buyers or customers, veterinarians, research institutes and political parties a little less. According to the **focus group**, this is linked to the limited effectiveness of technical assistance and access to information.

**Figure 4.2 Information sources for young farmers**



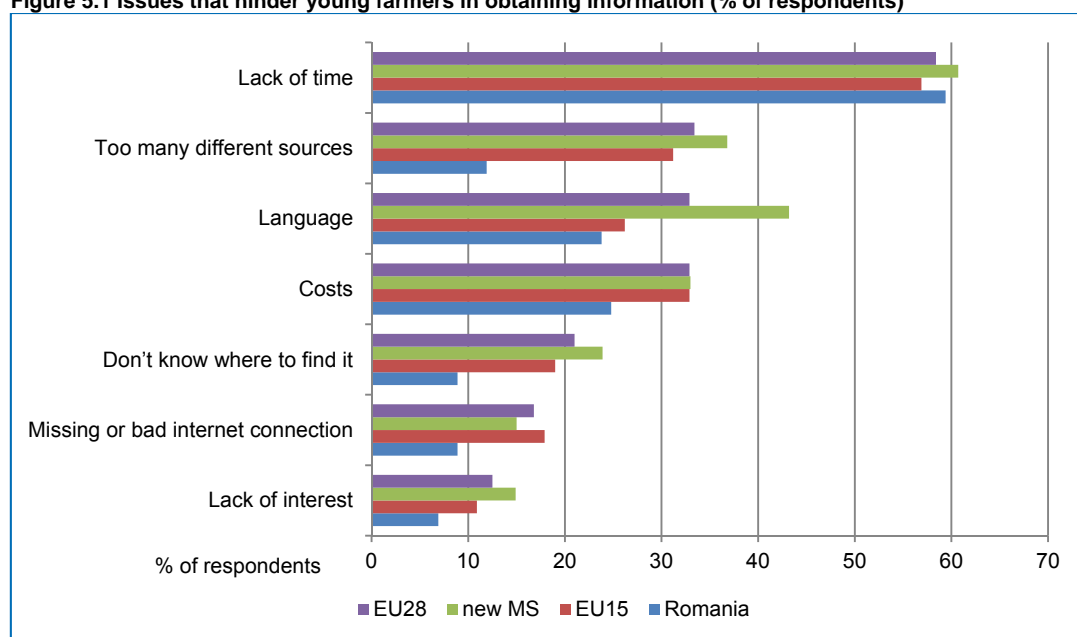
Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

## 5 Hindrances in obtaining information

The interviewed young farmers were asked which issues were hindering them most in obtaining information, e.g. lack of time, too many sources, the language in which the information is available, the costs of the information, lack of good internet connection. The figure below describes the results.

**OUTCOME:** The hindrances in obtaining information that the interviewed young Romanian farmers perceive seem to be less severe compared to the other young farmers in the EU. Lack of time is an exception. This seems to be an equally important hindrance for the interviewed young Romanian farmers than for their peers in other EU countries.

**Figure 5.1 Issues that hinder young farmers in obtaining information (% of respondents)**



Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

The **focus group** members confirm that lack of time is the main hindrance in obtaining information and attending training and skills development programmes. In the case of exchange programmes or internships this is particularly relevant as they take up a lot of time. One participant explained this particular constraint for young farmers by two key factors: young farmers have to manage the farm and cannot be replaced for a long time and they have young families which limit their absence from home.

Cost and language constraints have been also confirmed by the focus groups. These are usually addressed in training/exchange programmes. In addition, access to broadband internet can be a constraint for young farmers in accessing and obtaining information and knowledge in some areas. According to the focus group members, this issue will be addressed through a national strategy and plan and funded from European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 and the Romanian Government.

The members of the focus group mentioned the following solutions for the hindrances:

- Adapting the training programmes/exchange schemes to the availability of the young farmers;
- Ensuring costs are covered and language barriers are removed (through interpreters or language learning);
- Improving access to broadband and ICT infrastructure through public funds;
- Ensuring an adequate social environment in rural areas to retain young people or attract them from urban areas to set up farming activities;
- A more friendly and supportive banking system is needed for farmers in general and young farmers in particular;
- The educational system should create vocational education and training capacities to ensure modern updated qualifications in agriculture.

## 6 Suitability of exchange schemes

The young farmers were also asked about the suitability of the exchange schemes to address their knowledge needs and their interest in participating in these schemes. This was done by asking about:

- Participation of young farmers in exchange schemes and their satisfaction and awareness of exchange schemes;
- Young farmers' attitudes with regard to participating in an exchange scheme;
- Issues that hinder young farmers in participating in an exchange scheme;
- Intention of young farmers to join an exchange scheme;
- Opinion of young farmers about exchange schemes.

### 6.1 Participation of young farmers in exchange schemes and their satisfaction and awareness of exchange schemes

The interviewed young farmers were asked:

- How aware they are of existing exchange schemes in their country;
- If they participated in an exchange scheme;
- If they improved their skills after participating in an exchange scheme;
- If the exchange scheme taught the young farmer what he wanted to learn.

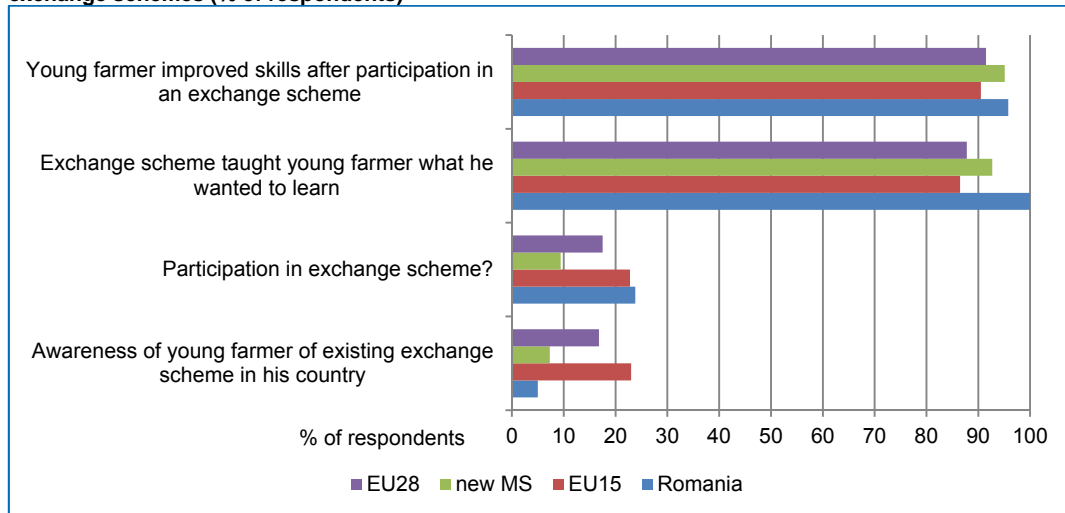
The figure below presents an overview.

**OUTCOME:** Like in other EU countries, the number of interviewed young Romanian farmers who did participate in an exchange scheme or is aware of an existing exchange scheme is quite low. Like other young farmers in the EU, young Romanian farmers who did participate in an exchange scheme were content about it.

There is limited experience with exchange schemes in Romania. Nevertheless, the participants confirmed that exchange schemes are among the best methods of providing practical skills and knowledge for farming, as well as using new equipment and technology.

The focus group participants are not aware of exchange schemes (in the sense of the study's definition) implemented in Romania except the scheme implemented by the Faculty of Agricultural Management from Timisoara for its students. The scheme was presented in the focus group.

**Figure 6.1 Participation of young farmers in exchange schemes and their satisfaction and awareness of exchange schemes (% of respondents)**



Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

## 6.2 Young farmers' attitudes with regard to participation in an exchange scheme

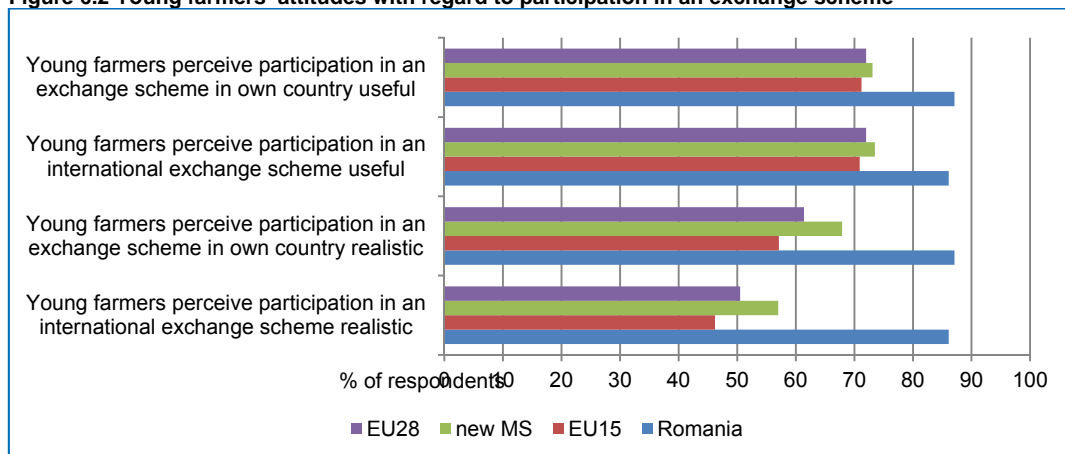
The interviewed young farmers were asked:

- If they consider participating in an exchange scheme in their own country useful;
- If they consider participating in an exchange scheme in their own country realistic;
- If they consider participating in an international exchange useful;
- If they consider participating in an international exchange realistic.

The figure below presents an overview.

**OUTCOME:** Compared to their peers in other EU countries, the interviewed young farmers in Romania seem to be more positive about the usefulness in participating in an (inter)national exchange scheme and the extent to which this is realistic.

**Figure 6.2 Young farmers' attitudes with regard to participation in an exchange scheme**



Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

According to the **focus group**, the main reason lies in the fact that exchange schemes are a good method of providing practical skills and knowledge for farming, as well as using new equipment and technology.

The focus group members reflect that exchange schemes are valuable and desired by young farmers because they can develop practical skills and acquire know-how about production, collection, storage, packaging systems, marketing methods and product presentation skills.

One example of an exchange scheme implemented by Banat University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine “King Michael I of Romania” from Timisoara, Faculty of Agricultural Management organises internships for the students from Economic Engineering in Agriculture specialisation for a period of two months (40 students/ year) to the UK, Germany and USA.

Due to the fact that farming experience is not so extensive in Romania, the exchange scheme has to be introduced with care and the farmers who want to join the scheme should be prepared as to how to make the most of the opportunity. Taking part in the scheme could be part of a larger programme which includes preparatory activities and also support after the exchange to ensure its sustainability.

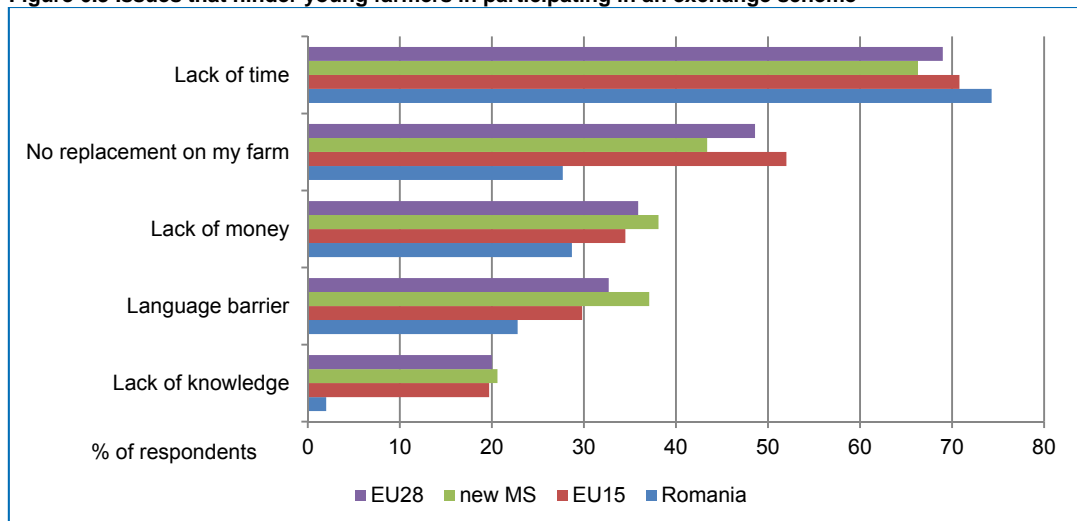
Similar measures that the participants indicated are visits to other farms or practice. These can be part of vocational training programmes but they are not designed as exchange schemes.

### 6.3 Issues that hinder young farmers in participating in an exchange scheme

The interviewed young farmers were asked which issues were hindering them most in participating in an exchange scheme, e.g. lack of time, no replacement at their farm, language barrier, the costs of the exchange, lack of knowledge on the exchange. The figure below describes the results.

**OUTCOME:** The hindrances in participating in exchanges schemes that the interviewed Romanian farmers perceive seem to be less severe in comparison to other young farmers in the EU. Lack of time is an exception. This seems to be an equally important hindrance for the interviewed young Romanian farmers than for their peers in other EU countries.

**Figure 6.3 Issues that hinder young farmers in participating in an exchange scheme**



Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

According to the participants of the focus group:

- Optimal duration of training varies between 2-6 and 12 months. The duration is limited by availability (time) constraints of the farmers (either they have young families or responsibilities in managing the farm). Experience shows that exchange programmes of two months worked well;
- Considering the current time constraints exchange schemes should last 2-4 weeks.

## 6.4 Intention of young farmers of joining an exchange scheme

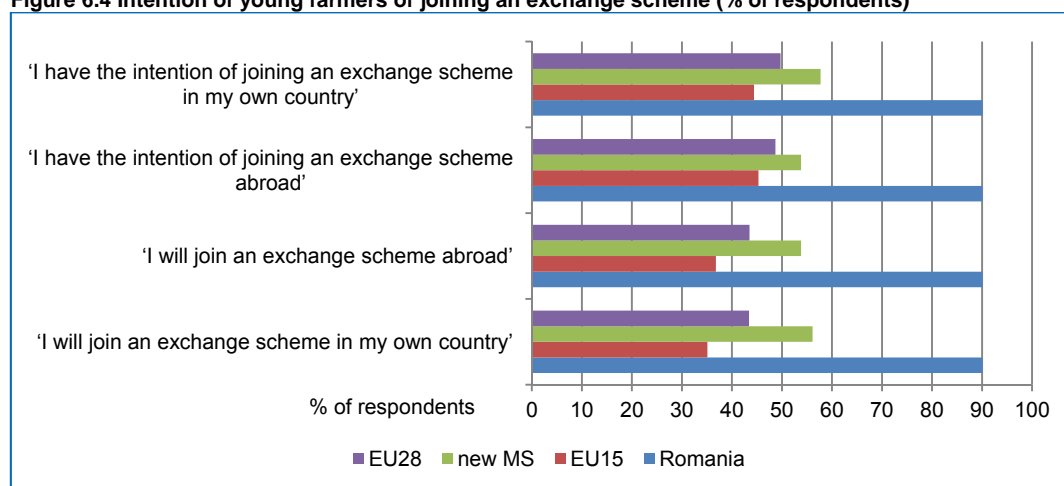
The interviewed young farmers were asked if:

- They have the intention of joining an exchange scheme in their own country;
- They will join an exchange scheme in their own country;
- They have the intention of joining an exchange scheme abroad;
- They will join an exchange scheme abroad.

The results are included in the figure below.

**OUTCOME:** The intention of the interviewed young Romanian farmers of joining exchange schemes, both national as international, is higher than that of other young farmers in the EU.

**Figure 6.4 Intention of young farmers of joining an exchange scheme (% of respondents)**



Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

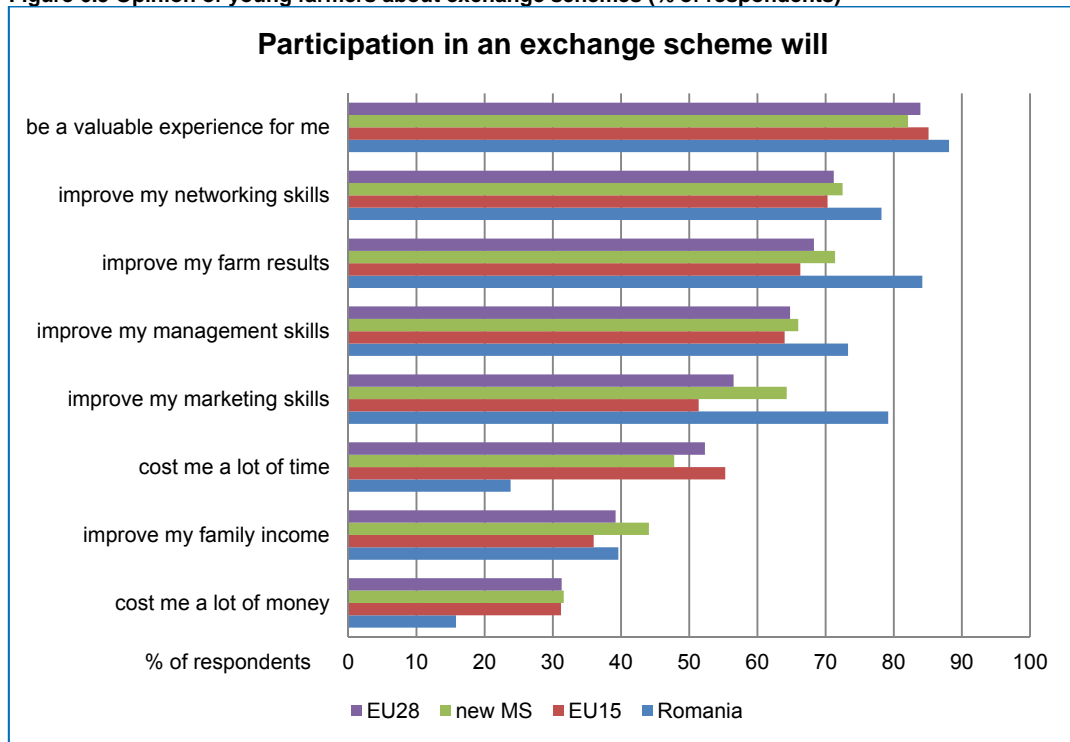
## 6.5 Opinion of young farmers about exchange schemes

The interviewed young farmers were asked their opinion of exchange schemes. They were asked if it would be a valuable experience for them, improve their skills (either management, marketing, networking skills), cost them a lot of time or money and if it would improve the family income or farm results. The figure below presents the results.

**OUTCOME:** The perceptions of the interviewed Romanian farmers on what participation in an exchange scheme will bring them seem to be more positive than the perceptions of their peers in other EU countries. They also say less often that participation in an exchange scheme will cost them a lot of time and money.



Figure 6.5 Opinion of young farmers about exchange schemes (% of respondents)



Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.



## 7 Focus group participants

The following people participated in the focus group:

Name	Organisation
Bogdan Alecu	Managing Authority for National Rural Development Programme (MA NRDP)
Georgeta Ujupan	County Agricultural Chamber of Brasov
Carolina Tătăruș	County Agricultural Chamber of Brasov
Ginu Costel Toma	Farmers' Federation "The Farmer"
Alisa Boghițoiu	Farmers' Federation "The Farmer"
Florentina Gheorghiu	Farmers' Federation "The Farmer"
Mihai Herișanu	Farmers Association in Horticulture and Vegetable Production
Ionel Zaharescu	Farmers Association in Horticulture and Vegetable Production
Iuliana Călin	Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Romania
Cristina Mănescu	CEED Romania (NGO)
Cătălin Constantin	Association of Communes from Romania
Liviu Cicioc Apetrei	ROMCONSERV – Employers' Organization from the Industry of Canned Fruit and Vegetables and Mixed Cans
Cosmin Sălășan	Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine from Timișoara, Faculty of Agricultural Management
Gabriela Ilie	Human Resources Consultant
Marius Vereș-Dănciuț	Business Consultant

**Reporter:** Liliana Lucaciu, Adelina Mărculescu, LIDEEA

**Date focus group:** 4 September 2014

**Place:** Grand Hotel Continental, Aman hall, Bucharest, Romania



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