

Practice Abstract #41

The importance of user-testing in optimizing an online knowledge reservoir

The aim of the EUREKA project (<https://www.h2020eureka.eu/>) was to test the feasibility of building an EU-level open-source agricultural knowledge reservoir. Many of the lessons learnt during the project are of interest and relevance to the developers of other similar digital platforms at a national or sectoral level.

The main focus of EUREKA was the building and testing of an online pilot platform called the EU FarmBook (<https://eufarmbook.eu/>). A key element of the design process of such a platform is user-testing.

A user test is a semi-structured interview including questions about the concept and specific elements of the platform and tasks which the participant has to execute. By conducting user tests, 6-8 users can typically detect up to 80% of main usability issues related to the platform. It is also possible to conduct unmonitored user tests where the attention is mainly focused on whether users are able to execute specific tasks.

User tests generally allow user researchers to detect why a user performs a task in a particular way, and whether the platform can be optimized to improve its user-friendliness. Additionally, user tests can be conducted on an existing platform, a prototype, a proof-of-concept, a minimal viable product and the fully developed product. By conducting user tests at several stages of the project, it is possible to detect major issues early on in the project and remediate these during the subsequent stages of the project.

