

A vibrant outdoor market scene with people shopping for fresh produce under red umbrellas. The market is bustling with activity, and the produce is displayed in wooden crates and baskets. The scene is set in a park-like area with large trees and a paved walkway. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Recipes For Success: Working Together For Healthy and Sustainable Diets in Europe



Eating Better

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Foreword

Together our impact is more powerful and inevitable

In September 2022, 25 change-makers from across eight European countries convened for three days on a farm outside of Berlin. The reason? To brew on where Healthy Food Healthy Planet as an emerging Pan-European movement needs to go next.

It was our first in-person event, having worked online for over two years, co-creating a strategy reflecting the voices and perspectives of over 120 different organisations. In our midst in Berlin were dietitians, doctors, policy-makers, climate change campaigners, animal welfare and food equity activists, funders, farmers, artists, united by a single demand: healthy, just and sustainable food environments, starting with rebalancing animal-sourced foods.

Because together our impact is more powerful and inevitable is part of our newly found purpose. We can only address this enormous challenge together, civil society and funders alike – locally, nationally, regionally and globally.

This guide, championed by Eating Better, showcases national and local level examples – where the ingredients for a successful recipe starts. Hopefully it is as inspirational a guide for you as it is for me, in my journey to weave a stronger European movement where diversity is our strength and difference is our teacher.



Marinke van Riet
Chief Weaver
Healthy Food Healthy Planet

‘We started this project to bring together our learning from the past 9 years of Eating Better. But in doing so, we found that there is much to learn from collaborations elsewhere in Europe. It proved again to us that working across silos and within national food cultures is critical for making progress towards more healthy and sustainable eating.’

Simon Billing
Executive Director
Eating Better



Executive summary

Our food system is unsustainable. It's pushing our warming planet way beyond its limits and driving obesity, preventable disease and food scarcity.

Thankfully, adopting healthier, sustainable diets on a wide scale is a main priority for civil society.

There's no clear solution; complicated problems require a vast range of groups and people sharing their knowledge.

Many organisations across Europe have realised it's more effective to tackle complex problems together to pool resources and expertise and make sustainable dietary change.

We've spoken to a diverse range of organisations and individuals working on healthy and sustainable diets, across Europe about collaborations.

In the spirit of collaboration, we want to share with you what we've found. We hope those involved and interested in collaborating for dietary change will find it useful and inspiring.



Collaborations: what and why?

Collaborations include coalitions, networks, alliances, movements, forums, working parties and advisory groups, and range from formally recognised legal entities to less formal relationships without legal recognition.

Collaborative models vary in their complexity. Some, such as informal networks, involve the exchange of information; others focus on single policy or campaign. More formalised collaborations focus on more complex initiatives and programmes, while others seek to transform the food system at a national or European level.

Coalitions and collaborative partnerships are likely to evolve, depending on the members' needs and goals and in response to a rapidly changing world.

Translating an idea into a collaborative project requires strong leadership and investment. All members of the collaboration must combine their insights, resources, skills and creativity. But the benefits are greater than the sum of their parts.

Collaborating allows more efficient working, encourages more consistent messaging, helps to increase influence and impact, and promotes diversity.



‘Any collaboration, coalition or network needs to be nimble. You need to constantly review, assess and adapt what you are doing. When you established a coalition you may have developed a clear theory of change but if its not working don’t stick with it – use your learnings to adapt, create a new one or assess if your coalition is needed.’

Kath Dalmeny
Chief Executive
Sustain



Six steps to coalition-building

Step 01

Is there a need for a coalition, and can you fund it?

First, consider whether any related groups already exist. If so, it may be better to join forces.

If you decide to go ahead, be sure the benefits will outweigh the potential costs.

Produce a funding strategy and test your ideas with potential funders, and make sure senior managers are confident you have the resources, and that you're not underestimating costs.

Step 02

Who will support you?

Establish a group of committed anchor partners who share your vision and have enough influence to create change.

Seek to engage a wide range of stakeholder groups, including farmers, civil society organisations, citizen groups, academia and health organisations. You may also want to include business and government representatives.

Consider who will be your other allies and challengers outside the coalition. Academic organisations may not be able to formally sign up to your coalition, but may be supportive.

Step 03

Have you got a clear vision?

Providing coalition partners with a clear vision of the change you want to see will be your anchor and inspiration, and will clarify your goals. Long-term coalitions can consider adopting a theory of change. This involves outlining how a particular way of working will lead to effective change by targeting the problem you're trying to solve.



Six steps to coalition-building

Step 04

Define your scope, aims and objectives

Involve all founding members to decide on the coalition's objectives and how you'll implement them.

Consider clarifying the roles and responsibilities of any governance groups and the nature of any secretariat, and your decision-making process. You may want to articulate this within a formal memorandum document.

Step 05

Create an annual work plan

The plan should identify the actions that will bring about the coalition's vision and objectives, and how long they will take.

Ensure these actions identify clear roles and responsibilities for members, and align with their skills.

You may want to consider establishing some working groups to ensure these actions are delivered on time and within budget.

Step 06

Keep the momentum

Maintaining momentum requires thoughtful leadership that recognises the warning signs of any challenges that may arise.

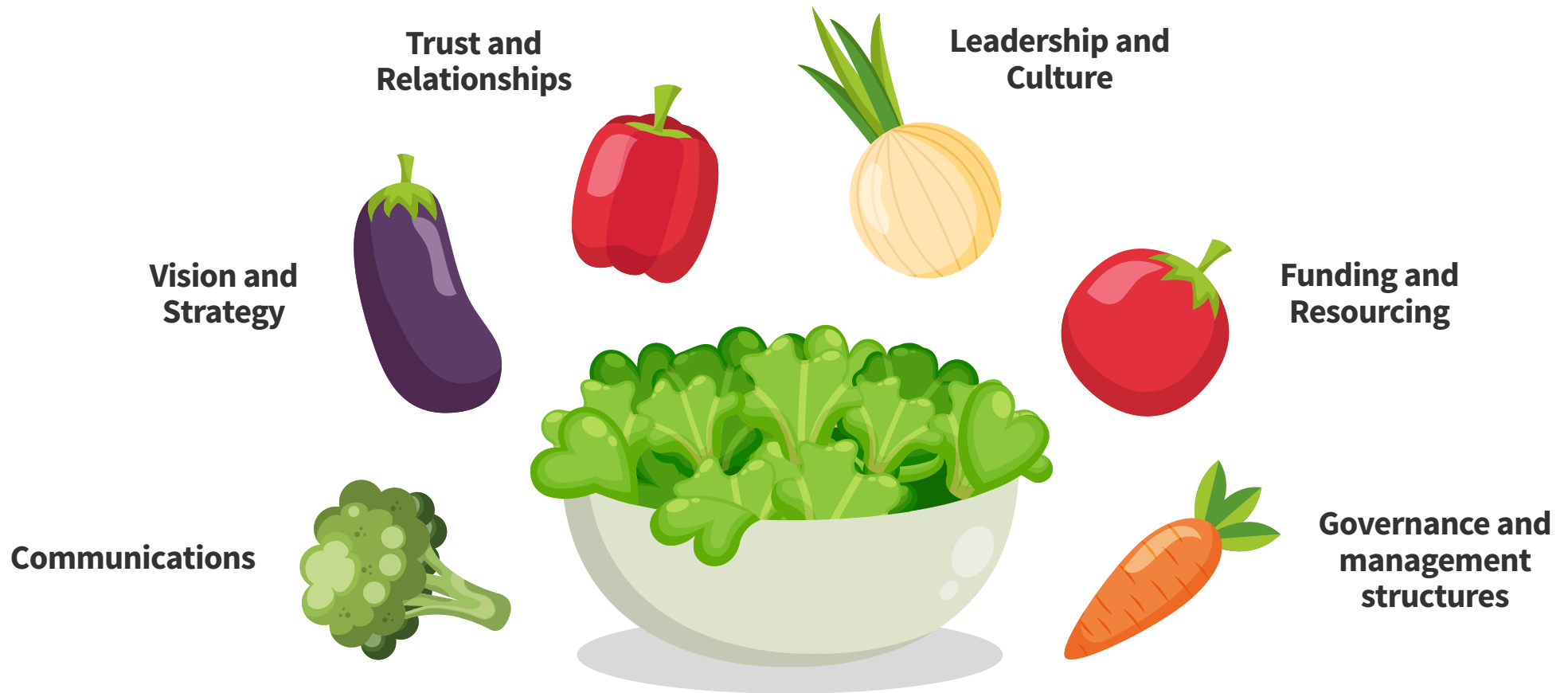
Consider sharing power and leadership, perhaps by rotating steering group chairs every 12 months, recruiting and involving new members, introducing interactive knowledge exchange sessions, and celebrating successes.

You may also want to measure how your membership feels about the added value created by the coalition.

All coalitions come up against challenges. The important thing is to learn from setbacks, and adapt accordingly.



Ingredients for success



Through interviews with collaborations, and expertise within Eating Better, we've identified six key areas of focus.



Communications

External communications

Many coalitions underestimate the need for proactive communications.

Invest adequate resources in external communication activities and communicate widely throughout the project to demonstrate legitimacy, encourage exposure to external stakeholders and attract internal commitment.

A communication strategy will help you identify when specific communication opportunities arise, and inform you of your positioning and messaging, and how to use communication assets.

Take time to test your assumptions, arguments and recommendations with politically diverse audiences.

Internal communications

Use between-meeting communication to avoid surprises and make meetings more productive. This is especially important for large groups, when reaching a consensus may take more time.

You may want to form working groups to clarify and report on specific issues between meetings. They can be established on a short-term basis, to develop specific policy positions or campaigns strategies, or to resolve tricky and challenging issues as they arise.

'It's important that coalitions can react to external events quickly and make the most of the communications opportunities these provide. The need to ensure you have a clear communications strategy and agreed top line messages is crucial.'

Benoir Granier

Food Manager

Réseau Action Climat





Case study Communications strategy underpins successful counter movement

We've had enough! (Wir Haben Agrarindustrie Satt) is a countermovement of farmers, environmental, nature, development, social justice and animal welfare associations working to fight against the industrial agriculture sector in Germany. It is run by the 'My Agriculture Alliance' (Meine-Landwirtschaft), and holds an annual demonstration in Berlin that calls for an agricultural transition and more agroecological forms of agriculture.

The movement has helped to unite environmentalists with farmers and farming unions against big agriculture. Following recent elections, and years of campaigning, Germany now has an agricultural minister from the Green Party, who has attended previous demonstrations. This is seen as a huge opportunity to use the movement to push for political action in support of an agricultural transition.



'Many German citizens are very disconnected from agriculture and the annual event is a great way of raising the awareness of industrial agriculture on the health of people and planet. It's very family-focused and involves a tractor procession, workshops and talks.'

Saskia Richartz
Coordinator
Meine-Landwirtschaft

Vision and strategy

Clarity of vision

An inspiring, clear vision that balances ambition with practicality can motivate members to overcome any differences and challenges.

Clarity of purpose

It's important that everyone on the coalition shares and understands its purpose. Therefore, setting goals can provide a strong framework on which to build coherent messages that motivate and unite everyone.

Informed by evidence

You're more likely to be taken seriously by policymakers if your work is evidence-based. Consider bringing to life policy positions with quantitative and qualitative evidence using personal testimonies of citizens, farmers and health workers impacted by our food system to create a powerful case for change. You may also want to invite academic partners into your coalition.

'There is a need to focus on a hope-based narrative, focusing on the positive visions for the future.... We need to be much better at creating radical futures which will inspire many collaborations to work to focus on what unites us, rather than what divides us.'

Marinke van Riet

Chief Weaver

Healthy Food, Healthy Planet





Case study Shifting the narrative

Coalitions emphasised that shifting narratives is crucial to shaping and reframing mindsets across the food and wider political systems, which can, in turn, shape policy and practice.

The **Cambiamo Agricoltura Coalition** consists of environmental, organic and agroecological associations focused on shifting the narrative of the Common Agriculture Policy reform.

Its plan includes: restructuring livestock supply chains to support more extensive, organic and regenerative forms of production.

The coalition is currently discussing how to better link to healthy and sustainable eating, since Italian culture is embedded in the Mediterranean diet, which is rich in wholegrains, fruit, vegetable, fish, nuts and legumes.



‘There is strong lobby from farmers focused on intensive production and this needs to be challenged . We need to address power imbalances and form coalitions of organisations who can challenge this narrative and assert new models of power.’

Damiano di Simine
*Regional President
Legambiente*



Case study

Developing a clear theory of change

The **Dutch Food Transition Coalition** (Transitie Coalitie Voedsel) vision is: 'a healthy life on a healthy planet. For everyone. The Netherlands as an inspiration and best practice for food system change'. With a focus on systems change, the coalition uses a theory of change based on patterns of transformation according to an S-curve. It focuses on two approaches:

1. The movement Facilitating and strengthening pioneers, innovators and disruptors from the bottom up. This includes joining forces with innovative farmer networks to give farmers a stronger voice and empower mainstream farmers to adopt agroecological practices.

2. The challenger Working with all the systems players, in particular the mainstream players who determine the rules of the game (e.g. big business, retail, financial sector and governments) to challenge them to support a food system transition. For example, it launched a supermarket benchmark that highlights how supermarkets score according to how well they market healthy and sustainable foods. They also run initiatives on the true cost of food to ensure a fairer playing field for sustainable and healthy products.



'We create a safe space in order to create trust and understanding between a diverse range of groups who do not normally work together, for example between farmers and the environmental movement. It's about building bridges.'

Joost de Jong
Strategic Advisor
Transitie Coalitie Voedsel

Trust and relationships

Building trust

Members should build an understanding of each other's needs, expectations, and requirements - but also understand that they'll need to learn how to disagree with each other and respect each other's positions and mandates.

Consider holding regular meetings to nurture dialogue on topical subjects, and provide opportunities for face-to-face engagement at least once a year.

Clearly communicate all decisions to members of the coalition to ensure transparency.

Addressing power issues

Address power imbalances when they arise. Members may never be equal (in size, influence, amount of resources) but they should always strive to be respectful of the value each brings.

It's important to develop constructive and fair group processes and to redress any imbalances of power. This can be achieved by creating a working climate that encourages open dialogue.

'The issues of livestock and meat consumption are complex, controversial and can provoke emotive reactions. Well facilitated collaborations provide a safe space in which to unpack many of these issues and identify a common vision and narrative in which a diverse group of stakeholders can rally behind.'

Kath Dalmeny
Chief Executive
Sustain





Case study

Building trust with farmer groups

The **Living Earth Coalition** (Koalicja Żywa Ziemia) aims to shape agricultural and food policy towards socially just and environmentally responsible production, distribution and consumption of food.

One of its priorities is working with farmer groups to support a policy shift, at a national and EU level, towards agroecological, organic and extensive farming systems.

Following outbreaks of African swine fever across Poland, the large intensive factory farming lobby was pressuring the government to shut down small-scale outdoor pig-farming operations, arguing they were increasing the spread of the disease. The Living Earth Coalition worked closely on a successful advocacy campaign with free-range and organic pig farmers, highlighting that intensive pig production systems, not extensive outdoor systems, were the vectors of the disease. The government subsequently dropped a proposal to close outdoor free-range pig production systems.



‘Communicating with and building trust with farmers is perhaps the most important thing we do. They have the potential to help us influence policy away from industrial livestock systems to those that are more regenerative in approach.’

Justyna Zwolińska
Consultant
Polish Living Earth Coalition

Leadership and culture

Strong and active founding partners

Strong, bold and aligned partners provide the energy, ambition and commitment required to lead a coalition.

Select your anchor partners carefully, ensuring they are aligned with your own organisational values and represent a diverse range of sectors so they can help you reach new audiences.

Coalitions should be mandated and supported by member organisations' senior management.

Co-creating ground rules

Establishing clear engagement principles helps guide the conduct of coalition members to engage with integrity.

Clarify roles and decision-making processes for your coalition and the roles and responsibilities of its members, steering/advisory group/board, chair and your coordinator/manager.

Strength in diversity, equity and inclusion

Inequity, exclusion and racism can be hidden within collaborative structures, so make sure to have a diverse demographic among your staff, members and other stakeholders and establish policies that support diversity, equity and inclusion.

A diverse range of organisations and perspectives best helps coalitions understand the food system and how to change it, and is key to challenging assumptions and reaching the widest audience.

'It's important to engage, develop and maintain senior level relationships with member organisations beyond their nominated coalition representative.'

Jane Landon
Chair
Eating Better



Engaging health organisations

Industrial food systems – factory farming, ultra-processed foods and chemical-intensive agriculture – play a huge part in the soaring rates of preventable disease.

As a result, improving public health is one of the most pressing motivations for transforming food systems. Health is a top priority for most governments – and the health sector is well positioned to advocate for policies and practices that support healthier food systems.

Organisations working in the health sector are best situated to understand the connections between food and health, and public health professionals and healthcare workers are consistently ranked as some of the most respected and honest professionals. Coalitions are keen to work with the health sector. Here's how to best engage with health organisations:

- The health sector wants to see strong, clearly communicated evidence (scientific and anecdotal)
- Focus on opportunities that improve people's health through preventative approaches
- Work with public health professionals, such as directors of public health and environmental health officers, and public health organisations, rather than organisations dealing with specific diseases



'It's not easy engaging with health organisations who are dealing with many health crises. You need to think carefully about your framing before approaching health organisations. Health organisations are more likely to engage with you if talk about the health benefits of healthy and sustainable diets (and impacts on obesity) rather than a narrow focus on the benefits of reduced meat consumption, for example.'

Modi Mwatsama
Head of Interventions
Wellcome Trust

Funding and resourcing

Clear funding strategy

Many coalitions start with some initial core funding and don't think about their long-term funding strategy until later. You need to build in time and resources to develop a clear funding model from the outset. Coalitions should make it clear if, when and how they accept money from business groups. Some decide not to accept any funds to avoid conflicts of interest, others accept funding after due diligence.

Most coalitions request some form of funding from their membership, which demonstrates the value of the coalition and a commitment to making it work. Clarify which membership model you'll be using from the beginning.

Maintaining dialogue

Keep funders involved from the start. There will be opportunities to strengthen coordination and collaboration between the funder community, civil society and coalitions, which will help to influence funder priorities, identify barriers to funding and ensure funders understand some of the funding challenges confronted by coalitions.

The role of funders

Funders should invest more in capacity for advocacy and legal intervention, and in programmes that focus on narrative shifts and changing the mindsets of policy makers, rather than single policy solutions.

They should invest in more strategic communications, and ensure that work links food production with consumption, focusing on both upstream and downstream drivers of change.

'Be patient. Things will always take twice as long as you expect they will take and cost twice as much money as you will anticipate.'

Laurence Scott
*Funding Manager - Lead Food
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation*



Funder Role in Coalition Building

Funders are crucial to supporting coalition-building, and providing expert guidance. We recommend:

- Focusing on investing in longer term programmes rather than short-term projects. Coalitions need core funding that supports its governance, as well as knowledge and information exchange.
- Investing in capacity for advocacy and legal interventions.
- Investing in programmes that focus on narrative shifts and changing the ‘mindsets’ of policy makers, rather than single policy solutions.
- Investing in better stories using strategic communications.
- Ensuring that work around sustainable and healthy diets links production and consumption.
- Strengthening inter-sectoral collaboration beyond traditional NGOs, such as health and development sectors.



Governance and management structures

Strong governance structures

Ensure your steering group or board is diverse and represents your membership base. It should include skills such as fundraising, finance, systems thinking, project management, public affairs, communications and technical knowledge.

Success will depend on the ability of coalition coordinators to manage the project, manage budgets and guide the group toward the objective. Bear in mind that it's common to spend up to 35% of budgets on project management and relationship management time.

Have a strong secretariat/coordinator who can project manage the coalition. They will need to resolve tensions, push for decisions and know when to step back. If you have the resources, you could employ an independent coordinator.

Learning and adaptation

All coalitions are constantly learning and adapting their strategies. You'll need to regularly reflect on what's working within the coalition and what isn't, so make sure to build time into your meetings for this, or ensure there are learning or training sessions.

Too often, coalitions focus on problems and next steps without pausing to appreciate their accomplishments. Take time to celebrate and learn from successes as well as failures.

Reflection is an ongoing process. Regular annual surveys with members can help provide valuable insights on areas for improvement. Ensure you evaluate each initiative regularly, and complete an end-of-project evaluation.

'Many Coalitions can be very fact and evidence based. This is important but we also need emotion and passion which can sadly be lacking in some collaborative initiatives.'

Saskia Richartz
Coordinator
Meine-Landwirtschaft



Challenges to collaborations

Turf issues

Individual organisations can be sensitive about sharing their work and connections. You may have to convince organisations that working together will benefit everyone, and talk to potential members to understand the sensitivities that may arise.

Past experiences

Organisations may have had a bad experience in the past, and believe that working with others isn't possible.

Developing common messaging

Messages around healthy and sustainable diets can be fraught with difficulties, such as tensions between vegan organisations and groups who advocate for better meats. It's unlikely that all organisations will agree with every message, and you may have to make some difficult decisions to exclude certain organisations where compromise is unlikely.

Domineering members

Domination by larger power organisations with access to significant resources can disenfranchise smaller groups that often represent disadvantaged groups. Creating a participatory atmosphere is an important part of starting a coalition.

Minimal organisational capacity

It might be necessary to find a coordinator, or a way to share the organisation's administration.

Funding

Finding sufficient funding, particularly for programmatic work, can be challenging. You may be offered funding that pushes the coalition in the wrong direction or requires it to act too quickly. New coalitions must be alert to funding possibilities, and be vigilant about possible conflicts of interest, or conditions attached to the funding they accept.

Leadership failure

Coalitions demand a special kind of collaborative leadership. If that leadership isn't available and can't be developed from within the coalition, its existence is probably at risk.



Measuring impact

Impact can be difficult to measure, particularly within coalitions that are creating longer term systemic change.

But there are ways to measure impact:

- Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) for each project, linked to your theory of change
- Capture qualitative data alongside quantitative data to capture your contribution towards change, using quotes and stories to communicate your impact
- Ensure you build time to measure and record impact within funding bids and justify why this is important
- Consider putting together an annual impact report to use as a communications and fundraising tool



‘Any collaboration, coalition or network needs to be nimble. You need to constantly review, assess and adapt what you are doing. When you established a coalition you may have developed a clear theory of change but if its not working don’t stick with it – use your learnings to adapt, create a new one or assess if your coalition is needed.’

Kath Dalmeny
Chief Executive
Sustain



Lifespan

Many coalitions don't last forever, but those focused on long-term systemic change are likely to evolve. The life expectancy of a coalition will be determined by a wide variety of factors including whether you have achieved your goals, access to continued funding and the support of your members. Your options include:

Continue – where the coalition continues to be impactful and secures funding. There are always likely to be some minor changes to governance, processes and the focus of the coalition, but the initial goals and theory of change remain relevant.

Adapt – Over time you may prove or disprove your initial theory of change, or adapt your initial goals. In this scenario, you still have the support from member organisations and funding to support these changes.

Merge – As coalitions adapt and change they may become more aligned with the goals of another coalition. You could create more impact by joining forces with other collaborative initiatives.

Disband – Once a coalition has achieved its goals - if it no longer has the support, or funding, or does not achieve its goals - you may need to consider closing the coalition and celebrating its successes.



Appendix: coalition membership funding models

European coalitions vary in their funding models, but they all rely significantly on funding from trusts, foundations and other philanthropic organisations. Some also receive funding from governments bodies, research organisations and business groups. All coalitions interviewed receive some funding from their membership base, using project based and membership fee funding models.

Type of Resource Mobilisation	Membership Contribution Model	Description	Pros and Cons
Internal	Flat Rate Membership Fee	An annual membership fee which applies across all members (250/500 Euros/ annum).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rate tends to be low given smaller organisations can't afford high rates. - Treats everyone equally and demonstrates commitment. - Small amounts of income for effort.
	Variable Rate Membership Fee	An annual membership fee rated according to the annual income of the organisation (usually from 100 to 3,000 Euros/annum).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More significant amounts of funding can be received through membership. - Requires more administration and checking of member accounts. - More equitable according to the size of an organisation.
	Ad Hoc Membership Funding Requests	Requests for ad hoc funding (usually project related) that are often requested from larger members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No formal structure and little administration. - Funding from membership limited. - Often project rather than programme related funding.
External	Project Donor Funding (no or little membership fees)	Joint fundraising by and funding to Coalition members/coordination unit from major donors, often managed by larger Coalition members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This can provide significant funding for many of the core costs to the Coalition, particularly during early establishment (initial 2-3 years and sometimes beyond). Good way to join forces and strengthen relationships with larger members who often have higher capacity to manage these funds. - Very dependent on the priorities of larger members and funder, which can change over the longer term.
	Programme or Core Donor Funding (no or little membership fees)	Fundraising by, funding to and managed by Coordination unit from major donors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This can provide significant funding for many of the core costs for the Coalition and the Unit. - Hard to come by as most donors do project funding. - Need good capacity to manage large funds. - Creates a sense of competition between members and Coordination Unit.



Appendix: collaboration governance structures

Governance structures vary considerably between collaborations and there is no one-size-fits-all model. Each will be dependent on the issues addressed, the cultural context, the partners, and the legal status of the collaboration (formal or informal).

This table shows the main types of collaborations and governance structures used by those organisations we spoke to across Europe.

Type of Collaboration	Description	Features of Governance Structures
Coalitions and Alliances	These tend to be semi-official membership organisations. They typically have broad long-term policy-oriented/campaigning/advocacy goals and often span large geographic areas (national, pan-European and international).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Often formalised governance structures with a board/steering group/chair and various working parties, regular meetings, and an annual general meeting. - Often a secretariat that supports coordination and management, sometimes independent or services provided by a large member.
CSO Forums, Networks and Movements	Often convened around a common purposes of sharing information, intelligence, and contacts; ensuring that people are not duplicating effort; and to make opportunities for contacts, partnerships, and shared advocacy work. Longevity varies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More significant amounts of funding can be received through membership. - Requires more administration and checking of member accounts. - More equitable according to the size of an organisation.
Advisory Groups	Generally, respond to organizations or programs by providing suggestions and technical assistance. Typically, short to medium term.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No formal structure and little administration - Funding from membership limited. - Often project rather than program related funding.
Task Forces	Often specific individuals come together to accomplish a specific task or activity (specific policy, campaign, event, communication) often at the request of a host organisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This can provide significant funding for many of the core costs to the Coalition, particularly during early establishment (initial 2-3 years and sometimes beyond). - Good way to join forces and strengthen relationships with larger members who often have higher capacity to manage these funds. - Very dependent on the priorities of larger members and funder, which can change over the longer term.



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Joost de Jong, [Transitie Coalitie Voedsel](#) (Netherlands)

Benoit Granier, [Reseau action climat](#) (France)

Aurélie Catallo, [Pour une autre PAC](#) (France)

Jeroom Remmers, [True Animal Protein Price Coalition](#) (Netherlands)

About the partners



Eating Better is a UK alliance of 60 organisations across environmental, animal welfare, farmer, public health and social justice organisations. Established in 2013 to accelerate the transition from producing and eating too much meat and dairy to a fairer, healthier and more sustainable food system that is better for animal welfare and for nature.



Compassion in World Farming is a leading international specialist charity for farm animal welfare. Their vision is a world where farm animals are treated with compassion and respect and where cruel factory farming has ended.



Healthy Food Healthy Planet is an emerging Pan-European movement uniting civil society organisations and funders so that healthy, just and sustainable food environments become the norm and harmful animal agriculture ends.

www.eating-better.org

Company registration number: 9772128

Charity registered number: 1175669

To view all organisations that are part of Eating Better, click [here](#).

