



**European Leader Association
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2023

EUROPEAN LEADER CONGRESS



Event on the 18 & 19 of December 2023

European Parliament
European Committee of the Regions
European Economic and Social Committee
European Commission



EDITO

THIBAUT GUIGNARD

This Congress was an historic moment. For the first time since the beginning of the program in 1991, the European representatives of the LEADER program were welcomed in the hemicycle of the European Parliament, the beating heart of European democracy.

This gathering, which went beyond the current borders of the European Union, sent a clear message: rural areas are entitled to their share of Europe, because they are the Europe of territories, in their diversity, and carry in them a part of the answers to the major challenges of the European Union.

More than ever, LEADER and, more generally, local development led by local players appear to be one of the answers for a Europe closer to its citizens.

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Thank you

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Why organising a LEADER Congress

On December 2023, the European Leader Congress was held in Brussels, Belgium. At this conference, the **650** delegates from **36** countries representing about 2600 LEADER Local Action Groups in and beyond Europe, rural networks, representatives of managing authorities, the Committee of the Regions, the European Commission, the European Parliament and of the European Economic and Social Committee met and discussed about the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas and rural development policies as regards to the role of LEADER/CLLD (Community-Led Local Development).

The event was a moment of sharing and unity on a European scale, focusing on the future of rural development. Besides, this Congress is of particular importance in the run-up to the European elections scheduled for June 2024.



European Parliament

DAY 1

A look back at the 2023 European LEADER Congress.

ELARD, the European Leader Association For Rural Development, under the French presidency, organised for the first time an event of this magnitude, bringing together the four corners of Europe in the European institutions in Brussels on 18 and 19 December 2023. It was an opportunity for the various stakeholders present to discuss the challenges of LEADER on a European scale and to exchange best practices from each country, as well as their different difficulties.

As part of the consultation on the future of the common agricultural policy post-2027, this Congress was an opportunity for the Commission, the Parliament but also the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union to recall their support for rural development actors.

THIBAUT GUIGNARD

*« What a great family reunion !
The family of European rural areas gathered in Brussels, in the European Parliament, the beating heart of European democracy. »*



INTRODUCTION OF THE EUROPEAN LEADER CONGRESS

INTRODUCTION

The 2023 European LEADER Congress started on 18 December 2023 in the hemicycle of the European Parliament in Brussels.

To introduce the Congress, Thibaut Guignard, President of ELARD, opened the event by recalling the importance of rural territories within the European Union and European funds for the territories. He underlined the central place and role of LEADER-CLLD for the development of rural territories in Europe and the need to support the approach.

Janusz Wojciechowski, Commissioner for Agriculture, then took the floor to underline the important role of Local Action Groups in the development of rural areas, even more so a few months before the European elections.

Representatives from each European institution are taking part in the debate with a common idea: to strengthen the position of LEADER and bring resources to rural areas. The speakers were Carolina Gutierrez, representative of the Spanish Presidency of the Council of Europe, Isilda Maria Prazeres Gomes, President of the COR NAT Commission, Peter Schmidt, President of the NAT Section of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC).



Following Janusz Wojciechowski's speech, a video of Dubravka Suica, Vice President of the European Commission in charge of Democracy and Demography, was broadcasted within the hemicycle.

In this video, she insisted on the importance of having a common and precise vision of LEADER-CLLD :

« What first started out as a vision is now a vital tool that citizens, authorities and member states can use. Thanks also to the ambition and efforts of LEADER-CLLD, we are implementing the long-term vision through the Rural Pact. »

CAROLINA GUTIERREZ

« For this last participation of the Spanish Presidency in an official act, we are happy that it is an event for Leader and rural development. We believe that LAGs and rurality are the future of the European Union. »



PETER SCHMIDT

« Leader is an important program to change the vision of current policies. We need more Leaders to energize rural areas. We must shout it. The future is rural. »

Irène Tolleret, Member of the European Parliament and Vice-President of Leader France, highlighted that rural actors should be more listened, and that the importance of their roles should be recognized. Indeed, rural actors are the best persons to explain what is happening in rural and local areas.

ISILDA MARIA PRAZERES GOMES

« The European budget for rural development is insufficient. The European Committee of the Regions is asking for more resources. The long-term vision is a real step forward. »

THIBAUT GUIGNARD

« Rural areas are entitled to their share of Europe because they are the Europe of territories, in their diversity and carry within them part of the answers to the major challenges of the European Union. »



CONGRESS PLENARY – AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

PRESENTATION OF THE SECOND ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION

The afternoon continued with an exchange of views on rural development policies in Europe. During this plenary session, were present: Radim Sršeň, Member of the European Committee of the Regions and Deputy Minister for Regional Development of the Czech Republic, Isabel Carvalhais, MEP and Rapporteur for the AGRI Committee on the long-term vision for rural areas in the EU at the European Parliament, Lidija Pavić-Rogošić, Rapporteur for the opinion on the "Long-term vision for rural areas in the EU" of the European Economic and Social Committee, Mihail Dumitru, Deputy Director General of DG AGRI at the European Commission, and Hartmut Berndt, President of BAGLAG and Vice-President of ELARD.

A PLEA FOR EUROPE A FEW MONTHS BEFORE THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS.

LEADER and more generally local development led by local actors appear more than ever as one of the answers for a Europe closer to the citizens and face the pressure on democracy by allowing greater ownership of European policies.

A few months before the European elections in June 2024, the Congress was also an opportunity to send a strong message to both representatives of rural areas and European institutions.



LEADER is a method, a tool, in which already established stakeholders are experienced. It is not a European fund but a European rural development programme with a method. LEADER makes visible the benefits of the European project in local areas. Within the CAP, LEADER is the tool that contributes most to the Long-Term Vision for the Development of Rural Areas in Europe (LTVRA).





2023 European LEADER awards

Talking about LEADER-CLLD is mainly about highlighting projects. That is why, ELARD organised the European LEADER Awards 2023: a competition to reward the most impactful and innovative European projects of the 2014-2020 programme and highlight concrete achievements funded by the LEADER 2014-2020 programme. The European LEADER Awards 2023 ceremony took place during the European LEADER Congress at the European Parliament on 18 December 2023. **119** LAG projects were submitted by numerous LAGs from all over Europe.

The competition was supervised by a jury panel , who selected the three best projects. The jury was made up of :

- Isilda Maria Prazeres, President of CoR NAT Commission
- Peter Schmidt, President of the NAT section of the EESC
- Stefan Niedermoser, Austrian LEADER Forum
- Thibaut Guignard, ELARD President
- Irène Tolleret, MEP & Vice-President of Leader France

At the same time, one winning project was selected by one online public vote ahead of the ceremony. A total of **36,947** votes were cast.





Winner Public vote - 30 065 votes / 36 947 total votes



Technology club Albrechtice nad Orlicí – Tékáčko

By the LAG from Czech Republic: NAD Orlicí, o.p.s.

With the project bearer : registered association - non-profit organization

Established in 2018, the Technology Club – Tékáčko, based in Albrechtice nad Orlicí, is a regional center for polytechnic education, offering hands-on experiences in robotics, programming, and 3D printing. The club stands out nationally, collaborating with the Regional Network for the Support of Talents and participating in competitions.

Beyond individual skill development, Tékáčko has a broader impact on the community, inspiring students, supporting teachers in incorporating technology, and enhancing the region's reputation in non-formal technical education. The LEADER's role involves supporting schools, facilitating collaborations, and contributing to community initiatives.

Tékáčko's emblematic character emphasizes teamwork, creativity, and environmental responsibility. As a LEADER priority, the project addresses the shortage of technically qualified schools, preparing youth for Industry 4.0. The club's inclusivity, accessibility, and collaboration potential make it a valuable resource for teachers and other Local Action Groups.

In summary, Tékáčko serves as a dynamic educational hub, shaping the future of young learners in the tech field while fostering community growth and collaboration.



1st Jury's choice



Villages of Portugal

By the LAG from Portugal: LAG ADRITEM (Associação de Desenvolvimento Regional Integrado das Terras de Santa Maria)

With the project bearer : ADRITEM (leading a consortium of 16 Local Action Groups)

"Villages of Portugal/Aldeias de Portugal" is a collaborative network of villages using the LEADER approach to co-create development projects, led by Local Action Groups with support from ATA. Operating across Mainland Portugal, the initiative aims to enhance cultural heritage, reinforce rural demographics, and promote social inclusion.

With active involvement from 16 Local Action Groups, the project has successfully classified 61 villages, improving quality of life and preserving rural traditions. Emphasizing community participation and emotional bonds, the initiative drives local development sustainably.

The project's emblematic character lies in its role as a catalyst for sustainable dynamics, addressing cultural preservation, local economic development, environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and increased quality of life. It serves as a strategic model for combating rural depopulation and poverty, attracting cultural tourism, and promoting overall well-being in rural areas.



2nd Jury's choice



The Green Experience

By the LAG from Spain : Asociación Desarrollo Rural Turia Calderona
With the project bearer : Santiago Alandí Compañ

Ruralgimia's green experiences project, situated in the Valencian region of Camp de Morvedre, innovatively addresses rural challenges by interweaving accommodations, a travel agency, and an agricultural venture. Leveraging local resources and the Ojos Negros Greenway, the project fosters sustainable tourism, creates jobs, and combats environmental issues. Recognized for quality, it serves as a replicable model for rural development, showcasing the potential of integrating tourism, agriculture, and recreation for holistic regional growth. LEADER's support has been instrumental, providing financial backing and strategic guidance, elevating the project's impact and visibility.



3rd Jury's choice



Supporting mobility in rural areas

By the LAG from French Guiana : Agglo'GAL

With the project bearer : Auto Ecole Sociale Nomade

“Auto-École Sociale Nomade” addresses the challenges of isolation in Guyana by offering an itinerant social driving school. Operating in remote areas, this innovative project utilizes a specially equipped vehicle with a driving simulator, bringing driving lessons to communities. Launched in April 2021 with LEADER program support, it targets marginalized individuals, including job seekers and students, promoting social and professional integration. By facilitating access to mobility and combatting economic marginalization, the project has already enabled 35 candidates to obtain driving licenses in Matoury and Roura, leading to employment opportunities. The project's success positions it as a catalyst for regional development and social inclusion, with plans to expand to other communes in 2024. Emblematic of LEADER priorities, the project addresses mobility issues, geographical isolation, and economic marginalization, contributing to a collaborative, inclusive approach. The success in French Guiana underscores its adaptability, making it transferable to other contexts facing rural mobility challenges. “Auto-École Sociale Nomade” serves as an inspiring model for regions seeking solutions to enhance socio-economic development through targeted interventions.



LEADER and CLLD within European policies post 2027

Declaration of Brussels, December 2023

Strengthening LEADER/CLLD post 2027

The Declaration of Brussels

All of the discussions were the subject of a unanimous vote on a resolution presented by ELARD in the hemicycle at the end of the first day. You can find the Brussels declaration of December 2023, pronounced and voted during the 2023 European LEADER Congress in the hemicycle of the European Parliament through this QRcode or this link :



http://elard.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/The-Brussels-Declaration_v6.pdf



European Committee of the Regions & European Economic and Social Committee

DAY 2



A DAY DEDICATED TO NETWORKING AND EXCHANGES

After a day of discussions at the European Parliament, a second day devoted to workshops was organised to allow participants from all over Europe to discuss all subjects around LEADER and rural development in the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee.

Sixteen workshops were organised over three sessions throughout the day which mobilized nearly 80 speakers from different Member States and different European networks and institutions.

THE WORKSHOPS

European Rural Pact, role of Local Action Groups, Gender equality in rural area, implementation of LEADER-CLLD in different member states, cooperation, LEADER added value, multifund, ... so many subjects that animated this day.

This day of exchange of good practices demonstrated the importance of LEADER-CLLD in the development of rural areas and the consideration of European policies in rural territories. LEADER-CLLD appears to be one of the main steps that democratically structures the European projects, and since 1993 has ensured the presence and visibility of Europe in every municipality, in every village in Europe.



Presentation of

THE WORKSHOPS

**Summary of each workshop session on
19 December 2023.**

WORKSHOP : TAKING STOCK OF WHAT WORKS IN LEADER TO STRENGTHEN THE APPROACH FOR THE FUTURE

SPEAKERS

- Stefan Niedermoser, LEADER-forum Austria
- Wolfgang Berger, LEADER-forum Austria
- Barbara Stumpf, LAG Zeitkultur Oststeirisches Kernland
- Iwona Listwan, DG AGRI, European Commission

From a funding assistance centre to the regional development hub... that is what LEADER enables.

This workshop aimed at exchanging on what the crucial steps over the next two years are in order to secure the approach. Together with the audience, the speakers also demonstrated why LEADER is a perfect method and why it is relevant. Discussions were focusing on the new framework conditions needed for LEADER to become transformative.

During the presentations, it has been highlighted that a shift in the meaning of LEADER from "links between actions for the development of rural economy » to « community-led local development" occurred, which shows the greater social importance of LEADER.



Discussions and exchanges also focused on the added value of LEADER. In addition to be undoubtable, participants all agreed that the latter has several dimensions :

- A social dimension : By promoting democracy and a better understanding of the EU and LEADER. It has been recalled at several times that LEADER is much more than a funding program.
- A thematical dimension : LEADER and economy, LEADER and social/municipal affairs ; LEADER and environnement/climate.

The success of LEADER and its added-value is possible thanks to the Lags. Indeed, speakers and participants of this workshop highlighted the importance of the Lags and their roles, which are at the heart of the success. However, most of the time dismissed, they recalled once again for the recognition of the Lags.

The discussions of this workshop also lead to the conclusions that there is a need for new framework conditions while keeping the bottom-up approach which is the key of the LEADER approach. In order to act accordingly and to provide all its functions, LEADER need more resources : financial and human ones.

Key takeaways :

- LEADER is a participatory regional development, combining technical and social innovation, and promoting the « 3 T's » : technology, tolerance and talent.
- There is a need for a new general understandable story about LEADER added-value for people outside the community.
- For beyond a funding program, the special added-value of LEADER is the so-called "participatory democracy », where quickly realizable and locally adopted solutions to global challenges are necessary.

"LEADER is a mix of bottom-up and top-down."

"We need resources to provide the roles and functions LEADER can offer and do."

"We should use artificial intelligence also for social innovation."



WORKSHOP : HOW TO ASSESS LEADER ADDED VALUE: APPROACHES AND EXPERIENCES?

SPEAKERS

- Marili Parissaki, European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP
- Valdis Kudiņš, European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP

Marili Parissaki and Valdis Kudins presented the Thematic Working Group (TWG) update, launched in Spring 2023. With **50+** stakeholders, including LAGs and DG Agri, the TWG aimed at evaluating LEADER's added value. Key outcomes include non-mandatory guidelines, providing an evaluation framework for social capital, governance, results, and impacts. Examples from Finland, Estonia, and Austria enriched the presentation. The session ended with a Q&A and promotion of relevant publications. The guidelines, titled 'Assessing LEADER added value,' are set to be published early in 2024.

“LEADER has an important role on people’s general opinion about the EU; its results should be better communicated.”

“Choosing the most important elements to assess is the most difficult stage of evaluation.”

“It is important to have a further adapt based on the Member State context and evaluation needs.”

“I am glad you are coming up with guidelines on something so important that still confuses many LAGs.”

“Invite LAGs and Networks to meetings where things are decided.”



WORKSHOP : IMPLEMENTING THE RURAL VISION & PACT: THE VALUE FOR LEADER

SPEAKERS

- Urszula Tabor-Budzich, Rural Pact Support Office & LDnet
- Enrique Nieto, Rural Pact Support Office
- Lidija Pavić-Rogošić, Rapporteur of the Opinion on the Long-term vision for the EU's rural areas of the European Economic and Social Committee
- Radim Sršeň, Member of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) & Deputy Minister for Regional Development of Czech Republic
- Eduard Trepas, Associació d'Iniciatives Rurals de Catalunya
- David Armellini, Agence nationale de la cohésion des territoires (ANCT)
- Terry Stavropoulos, Joint Research Centre
- Alexia Rouby, Policy coordinator at European Commission's DG Agriculture and rural development
- Luis Chaves, National coordinator of the Portuguese Federation of Local Development Associations (Minha Terra)

The objective of this workshop was to raise awareness about the Rural Vision and Pact among LEADER community; to build capacities among LEADER community to act as key partners of the Rural Pact at local level, and to explore how the Rural Vision and Pact add value to LEADER and LAGs, and the role they can play in it.

Alexia Rouby from DG AGRI outlined briefly the Rural Vision and Pact, and Urszula Budzich-Tabor from RPSO presented the recently published Policy Briefing on "Making the Rural Pact happen in Member States". The session highlighted two examples illustrating the translation of the Rural Pact into national and regional contexts:

- The Catalan Rural Pact, emphasised the importance of involving LAGs and regional networks for engaging local stakeholders and achieving multi-level governance in the building process of Rural Pacts.
- The French Rural Agenda, demonstrated the contribution of LEADER to the development of new tools for French territories, such as a platform consolidating all available aids and funds.

The presentations were followed by a panel discussion with all the speakers and with contributions from the audience. The discussion focused mainly on what the Rural Pact can do for LEADER, and what the LEADER community can do to help implement the Rural Pact. The key takeaways of the discussions are as follow:

The value of the Rural Vision and Pact for LEADER

- Brings rural issues to the EU agenda.
- Enhances recognition and support of LAG work.
- Brings rural issues to the EU agenda.
- Calls for local governance by participatory approaches
- Facilitates local strategies implementation with improved funding.

The role LEADER can play in Rural Pact's delivery

- Utilizes LEADER's established status to support the nascent Rural Pact.
- LAGs act as support offices, by disseminating information and moderating stakeholders. LAGs and Local Development Strategies (LDSs) are "Rural Pacts" at local level
- Mobilizes local communities for aligned actions. Mobilizes and engages local communities in collective actions.
- Provides innovation, up-to-date information and analysis for rural areas.
- Strengthens rural development policies through bottom-up approaches.

As also stated by the European institutions, LEADER and CLLD are identified as a good tool to delivery and accomplish the rural vision. The recognition has also to be financial. The audience recalled the need of adequate resources and conditions, both financial and regulatory as it will enable to respond to the existing expectations of rural communities and to be creative to anticipate future needs and contribute to solve it in a cooperative way.

"Facing the needs of rural areas asks for transversal policies and to break the silo between government areas."

"Implementation from the bottom up is better for all levels"

" Mutual support between Rural Pact and LEADER is essential."

"LAGs play a vital role in disseminating information and mobilizing communities."

"Ring-fencing budget to community-led policies should be highly promoted".



WORKSHOP : HOW TO INTEGRATE ERASMUS + IN LEADER COOPERATION - EXAMPLES FROM ESTONIA, SERBIA AND FRANCE

SPEAKERS

- Quentin Legouy, Le Controis en Sologne
- Bojan Kovac, Serbian Network of LAGS
- Triin Kallas, Estonian Network of LAGs
- Vincent Rousval, French Erasmus + Agency
- Alexis Lebrat, LEADER France

Despite shedding a light on the possibilities of combining LEADER and Erasmus +, the goals of this workshop were to hear feedback and experience from countries both within and outside the EU that have combined Erasmus + and LEADER fundings, but also to share conclusions and outcomes of the Erasmus + EPDL project, and to inspire LAGs to run similar exchanges.

Vincent Rousval explained how to use Erasmus + with LEADER. Once, the general objectives of the program were shared, as well as the priorities set for the program until 2027, he presented the different opportunities for LAGs . The session highlighted afterwards few examples illustrating the combination of Erasmus + and LEADER:

In Estonia, the Estonian LEADER Union has been involved in several Erasmus + projects. Triin Kallas presented the ESPRIT project, VET4Change project and the EPLD project.

In Serbia, Bojan Kovac explained how the EPDL project, run in partnership with Estonia and France, was beneficial for its country and LAGs in the implementation of LEADER in Serbia.

In France, Quentin Legouy explained the ESPRIT and EPDL projects, with the outcomes and benefits it lead.

Key takeaways :

- The Erasmus+ program is a very good tool for connecting people and organisations; it is a good first step towards establishing stronger partnerships.
- Non EU-countries can be involved.
- Education and training are the core of this program. Integrating it in LEADER cooperation allows exchanges of good practises and experiences, leading to the application of innovative solutions in the development of LEADER (in non-EU countries).
- Young people are given the opportunity to become significantly involved in the life of their community based on the experiences of their colleagues from abroad and to be initiators of positive changes in society.
- Erasmus+ often brings together different type of stakeholders and gives a more integrated view of the regions and its challenges. It is an opportunity for the LAG to use its potential to the full.

“As soon as a project involving a leader territory or members of a LAG concerns formal or non-formal education or training, get the Erasmus reflex - there's bound to be an action for you.”

“ERASMUS is a very good model for the inclusion of Non-EU countries in European flows.”

“We hope to continue cooperating with other Networks and LAGs in Europe and to be recognized as a good and reliable partner for cooperation”.

“Certain models can be copied to other countries.”





WORKSHOP : HOW TO IMPLEMENT LEADER IN COUNTRIES BEYOND EUROPE AND HOW TO COOPERATE WITH THEM

SPEAKERS

- Patricia Vazari, LEADER Network in the Republic of Moldova
- Marina Albu, LEADER Network in the Republic of Moldova
- Sandra Macura, Serbian Network of LAGs
- Petar Gjorgievski, Rural Development Network of North Macedonia
- Serhii Zamidra, Ukrainian association of Communities
- Marta Marcziš, AEIDL and representative of the Armenian initiative
- Antonella Valmorbida, ALDA

After introducing this workshop and highlighting the interest of international cooperation to move forward on common challenges, ALDA invited the speakers to present their points concerning the implementation of LEADER in respective country, and in particular the challenges and recommendations for improving the LEADER approach in the context of enlargement.

The workshop covered the challenges which Serbia has in changing perceptions within the rural areas' actors and communities, Moldova's building capacity completely without the involvement of managing authorities, North Macedonia in trying to use different funds available in their country and Ukraine in finding a way to make the right strategy in implementing LEADER in their country.





MOLDOVA

The implementation of LEADER in Moldova, a non-EU country, started with a pilot and multiplication phase which was of particular importance to make LEADER adapted to the local context. This volunteering effort was successful as the government started to invest in a national LEADER program. Other major steps have been followed such as the adoption of a law for the creation of LAGs. LEADER gained in its popularity and recognition however the budget allocated by the government remains not enough. European investment and support would be one of the solutions to support the development of LEADER. Cooperation with EU countries is highly demanded by the LAGs in Moldova, and many EU countries express their keen interest in collaborating with countries outside the EU. Regrettably, despite Moldova being acknowledged as a third country eligible for cooperation, there is a lack of available programs for such collaboration. Currently, the sole cooperation program accessible to Moldova is Interreg Next Romania.

The possibilities to incorporate Moldova and other non-EU countries into cooperation programs will be explored. For instance, within ERASMUS+, there are specific components that facilitate exchanges between counterpart organizations. However, it is noteworthy that this component is currently not accessible to non-EU countries.

“Cooperation ignites the collective intelligence of communities, inspiring them to welcome new ideas and implement innovative strategies, ultimately cultivating sustainable development and resilience in the heart of rural territories.”

“LEADER allows us to reach the unreachable.”



SERBIA

Originally planned in the IPARD 2 programme, the implementation of LEADER in SERBIA has been interrupted. However, LEADER should be now accredited through IPARD 3 Programme and Measure 5 in 2024, enabling Serbian LAGs to use it as of 2025. Nevertheless, the lack of knowledge and information by people and even rural actors regarding LEADER, its role and added value toward local communities is one of the main challenges. As for Ukraine, cooperation with EU countries is seen as one of the solutions. Indeed, it allows the exchanges of good practises with countries where LEADER is well implemented, but also to better understand and see the impact which LEADER has on people's lives and the whole community thanks to the mobilities.

UKRAINE

Despite the fact that the LEADER approach is only at its premises, the need for prioritizing rural development is more pressing than ever. Besides, the will to volunteer and to gather in groups in rural communities has grown since the war. However, one of the main challenges in advancing rural development in Ukraine is the lack of a systematic approach and clear prioritization by the Ukrainian government. There is an inconsistency in funding for initiatives led by active community groups. These groups often face financial instability, impacting the continuity of their projects. To address these issues, there should be a concerted effort to streamline strategies at the governmental level, ensuring that they align with the grassroots needs and are adequately funded. Partnerships, cooperation with EU countries, and exchanges of good practises seem to be the solutions to facilitate and strenghten the implementation of LEADER.



NORTH MACEDONIA

LEADER has been present in North Macedonia for more than 10 years. Two phases contributed to its implementation: the pre-legislation phase and the phase with legislation. The recognition of LEADER in North Macedonia started in 2012, thanks to the advocacy work done by the stakeholders: the National Strategy for Agriculture was set up. Came afterwards the secondary legislation, which was adopted as well as the rule book for methodology for the preparation of strategies for local development for rural areas. Nowadays, LEADER is well established in North Macedonia, with 2/3 of its territory covered by LAGs. The latter see themselves supported by the national program. Other tools should also be used to strengthen and secure resources, both financial and human ones. Indeed, North Macedonia is facing difficulties in terms of capacity. Another important challenge is the difference of maturity between the LAGs. Finally, LEADER in North Macedonia strongly relies on donors but their fundings is not enough as it mainly covers the facilitation of meetings.

ARMENIA

The project of implementing LEADER was designed in 2019 but got interrupted because of the covid-19 pandemic. In Armenia, innovation should be at the core of the LEADER approach. It is about democracy, society and economy. LEADER and LAGs are now recognized. The number of LAGs is growing: the 4th office opened. The Ministries of Territorial development and of Economic Development are both involved in the implementation of LEADER. Issues that Armenia is facing are similar to the ones of all the non-EU countries. There is, a need for multi-funding and people in rural areas are expected to do more with less.



WORKSHOP : THE FUTURE OF GENDER EQUALITY IN RURAL AREAS AND HOW LEADER CAN CONTRIBUTE TO IT

SPEAKERS

- Maura Farrell, Galway University, Ireland & FLIARA Project
- Tuomas Kuhmonen, Finland Futures Research Centre (FFRC)
- Louise Weir, FLIARA project
- Steve Dolan, Galway Rural Development Clg
- Marion Eckardt, ELARD
- Margaret Bateson, European Commission - DG AGRI

The session aimed to shed light on the status, challenges, and opportunities for women in rural areas, underpinned by the insights from the FLIARA Project (Female-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas).

An overview of the FLIARA project, its structure, workpackages and the team was given. One of its conceptual perspectives is related to gender. Indeed, FLARA aims at supporting rural/farm woman via a more effective innovation ecosystem spotlighting their achievements in networking woman with key actors engaged in innovation empowering women to continue leading, or start leading innovative practices in farming and rural areas.

The outcomes of the analysis run during the project showed that in **10** countries, **538** women led innovations. Rural and farm women are engaged in environmental sustainability, economic rural activities, social sustainability and cultural sustainability. However, there are many challenges to face such as:

Overcoming Traditional Gender Roles In Agriculture

Invisible Work On Farms And In Rural Settings

Labour And Employment

Childcare And Domestic Commitments

Involvement In Decision Making

Access To Finance

Access To Land

Gender discrimination is still pervasive in rural regions and the agriculture environment across the EU. When it comes to pay, training opportunities, and leadership roles, women still may discriminatory experience. Their ability to make decisions and their participation in agricultural organisations and policymaking is still constrained by conventional gender roles and stereotypes.

Key takeaways :

LEADER program can assist in overcoming the challenges and providing the opportunities thanks to:

- Funding for women-innovation (Direct Call)
- Rural Childcare options
- Farm Diversification project funding
- Training in business development and entrepreneurship
- Community Access to land programmes
- New Entrants into farming training/education and networking options
- Apply Affirmative Action





WORKSHOP : ENGAGING YOUTH IN RURAL AREA

SPEAKERS

- Annie Linsemark, European Youth Parliament
- Nicoletta Merlo, Rapporteur on upcoming EESC opinion "The role of youth in rural development"
- Christian Prip, LAG Bornholm (Denmark)
- Irene Martín García, Red Española de Desarrollo Rural
- Maria Gafo Gomez, DG AGRI, Vilis Brūveris, Cowork for youth

The main objective of this workshop was to share experiences on engaging with youth in rural areas, to get an understanding of the best practises about engaging youth and to inspire LAGs with possible approaches at the start of the new programming period.

After a quick introduction, the audience was splitted into small working - groups of 2/3 participants. Each group had to work on the following questions, which were also answered and discussed during the panel debate with the speakers:

"Why should young people from rural areas be engaged?"

"How to engage young people from rural areas?"

One of the main highlights of the discussions was that engaging youth in rural areas should be seen as "shapping our future together ».

As a good example to engage youth in rural areas, the RURBEST22 project was presented.

During the discussions, the « youth wash » issue was several times mentioned. Indeed, too many times, the presence of youth at conferences or panels only leads to photo opportunities no subsequent actions nor engagement. In order to counter this, it is important to actively participate from the local to the european level to ensure meaningful involvement and impact.

To truly engage young people from rural areas, speakers and audience of the workshop agreed on the necessity to have a multifaceted approach, which will enable not only to provide all the tools for capacity-building, but also to ensure that their voices not only matter but also contribute significantly to the progress.



"To truly engage young people from rural areas, we need a multifaceted approach."

"Young people must continue to work to make their voices heard, we are not there yet."



WORKSHOP : EXPLORING THE BENEFITS OF COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION WITH LEADER

SPEAKERS

- Hanane Allali, French Managing Authority (MASA)
- Dr. Konstantinos Zapounidis, LAG Pieriki
- Vanessa Halhead, Scottish Rural Action & ERCA

This workshop aimed at exploring the collaborative-cooperative pillar of LEADER-CLLD and its benefits, sharing best practice on how to create links between networks, hearing back from those that are exploiting those links, and inspiring the audience to connect beyond their territories.

Cooperation is one of the main pillars of the LEADER approach, particularly through its objective of involving rural communities in the development of its territory.

As programming progressed, although suffering from a lack of visibility, transnational and inter-territorial cooperation became increasingly important for rural actors. The vast experience accumulated in previous LEADER programmes shows that cooperation is a mechanism for effectively helping rural areas jointly design and share new solutions to common issues.

This workshop on LEADER cooperation presented French tools, as well as the implementation of some European cooperation projects :

For France, Hanane Allali explained the actions implemented by the National Rural Network at the national level to support LEADER in the cooperation development project, in particular with the national barometer of cooperation projects. This French tool, designed by the ATMAC LEADER network (an individualized methodological and technical assistance to LAGs), allows us to have a global overview of the situation of cooperation in France. Other specific tools and aids developed in France were presented.

Dr. Konstantinos Zapounidis showed European achievements developed by other networks, such as EmbleMatiC Mediterranean Mountains. As part of the EMbleMatiC cooperation project, the Ecojourneys guide was created. For the creation of this model, Dr. Konstantinos Zapounidis stressed the importance of involving all stakeholders, following a parallel model: companies, destination authorities and residents on the supply side, and visitors on the demand side.

The other speakers also explained how their respective organisations were contributing to cooperation.

“LAGs have the power, they need the support to transfer this power to cooperation!”

“Cooperation open days should be organised.”

Main questions asked :

- As rural area, what is the added value of cooperation?
- What can cooperation bring to rural areas?
- What is the main argument for rural areas to cooperate with others rural areas in Europe?
- What are the main barriers for cooperation? And potential solutions?
- What happens when a cooperation project is interesting and fits our area, but is not included in the local strategy?
- How flexible could be the local strategy?

Key takeaways :

- Discussion with managing authorities is needed at all levels (European, national and regional) ;
- LAGs need guidance for all the stages of the TNC (drafting, finding partners, implementation, follow-up);
- LEADER cooperation has a strong European dimension, making it possible to build European citizenship between the inhabitants of the territories of the Member States;
- LEADER cooperation is an important axis of DG AGRI;
- The persistent non-harmonization of this cooperation measure, with different rules from one country to another, makes it very difficult for LAGs to cooperate;
- Heavy administrative bureaucracy and the multiple requirements that must be fulfilled to be able to notify cooperation projects on the European Commission tool (SFC).

During the exchanges with the audience, the benefits of LEADER cooperation and transnational cooperation projects appeared to be multiple. It is clear that cooperation projects allow the sharing of experience, know-how and good practices. Cooperation allows networking, and the establishment of partnership leading to innovative projects.









WORKSHOP : EUROPEAN ELECTIONS : CHALLENGES OF RURAL AREAS AND HOW TO ENGAGE THEM

SPEAKERS

- Adrien Licha, ALDA and Take the Lead in the European Elections project
- Piotr Styczen, "Stand for more in 24"
- Bertrand Trepo, elected representative in the French Marne department
- Irène Tolleret, MEP, and Leader France

This workshop was based on exchanges, panel discussions and debates. The main goal was to highlight the importance of rural areas in results of the 2024 EU elections. Undoubtedly thanks to the discussion with the audience, best practices were shared on how to involve the rural communities in EU elections.

Two set of questions asked:

- 1** The first one focused on the challenge of mobilisation and suggestions in terms of communications were proposed.
- 2** The second one focused on topics and challenges at stake, such as infrastructure, connectivity, financing. Speakers shared with the participants their suggestions and recommendations to overcome these issues.

A small panel discussion took place afterwards between the speakers on their perspective for the next EU elections.

Key takeaways :

- Specific role and approach of LEADER as a tool to bring Europe/EU democracy to the rural areas;
- Importance to give visibility to the EU in rural areas;
- Importance of this bottom up approach ; this philosophy is the only one close to the citizens;
- Empowerment of the rural communities with LEADER to show them they have control on strategy while implementing EU programmes;
- Importance of involving youth into elections (both as voters and candidates) ;
- Youth's feeling of being underrepresented in authorities, such as European Parliament, leads to a lack of interest in politically related topics.

"Rural development should be the central point of the next mandate."

"LEADER is the best ambassador of European policies."

"LEADER is the best tool with ERASMUS to make rural areas feel European."

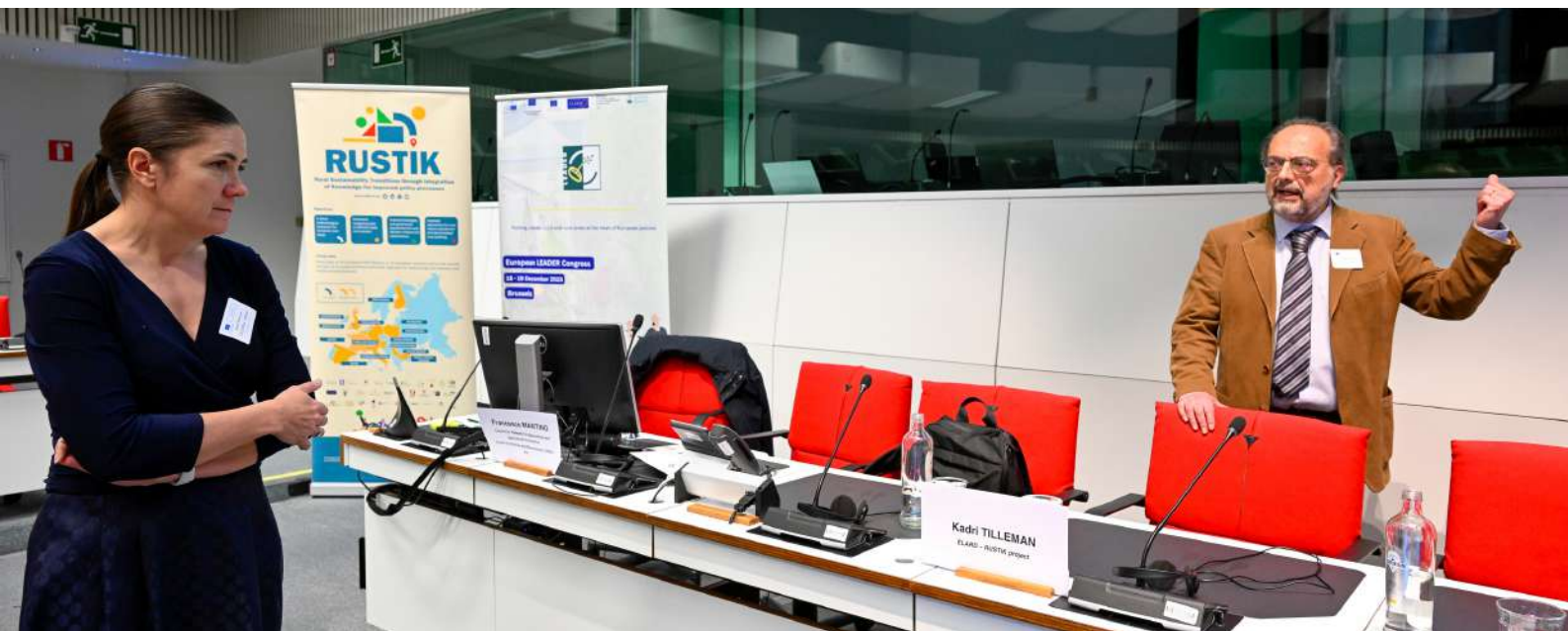
"LEADER is a way for communities to take control on European funds."



WORKSHOP : RURAL PROOFING: SCIENCE AND NATIONAL EXAMPLES

SPEAKERS

- Kadri Tilleman, RUSTIK project & ELARD
- Francesco Mantino, Council for Research in Agricultural and Agricultural Economics, Centre for Policies and Bio-economy (CREA-PB)
- María José Murciano, Red Española de Desarrollo Rural



The goal of this workshop was to raise awareness of what rural proofing is, and how it must be delivered. The concept was illustrating with several examples.

EXAMPLE 1: RUSTIK PROJECT

Kadri Tillemann highlighted that the significance of rural proofing for ELARD has been emphasized due to its increasing importance in both the European Rural Pact and the EU's Long Term Vision for Rural Areas. The relevance of the topic for ELARD is also related to ELARD's role as partner in Horizon Europe project RUSTIK (Rural Sustainability Transitions through Integration of Knowledge for improved policy processes) since one of the most recent deliverable of the project that was launched in late 2023 was a comprehensive report on rural proofing: methodological aspects and implications for stakeholders. She pointed out that one of the data sources to provide clear evidence about the vital need for rural proofing is OECD Regional Outlook 2023 which illustrates the rural-urban inequalities in EU Member State in different policy areas.

EXAMPLE 2 : RURAL PROOFING IN SPAIN

María José Murciano delivered a presentation regarding REDR's endeavours in implementing rural proofing in Spain. REDR launched a survey and awareness campaign that yielded the following outcomes:

- A substantial outreach to 30,000 recipients;
- Recognition at a high political level, with Pedro Sánchez, Head of Cabinet Spain Presidency, acknowledging the efforts;
- Identification and mapping of primary concerns;
- Formulation of recommendations for national and regional administrations, companies, and the civil sector.

EXAMPLE 3 : WHAT THE SCIENCE AND POLICY SAY

Franco Mantino give a presentation with a science-policy background and additional national examples of rural proofing. He pointed out several local implications of rural proofing, such as:

- Assess implications of a national/regional policy for the concerned rural area;
- Rural Proofing is a component of a place-based approach to local needs;
- Two categories of policies: policies not having a territorial focus ; and policies having a specific territorial focus;
- Rural Proofing of both kinds of policies should be part of the project cycle of the concerned area
- This implies some specific activities such as inventory of relevant policies for the area , monitoring funds allocation (funds mapping) and types of recipients , understanding potential effects on well-being (increasing social and economic disparities) , understanding potential relations (complementarities, synergies, conflicts) with projects managed by the local Agency.

Inputs from the audience following the presentations confirmed the vital role of sub-national governance level in effective implementation of rural proofing. The work done by the NRD Thematic Group on Rural Proofing, including their final output "A Framework of Rural Proofing Actions" was also highlighted.

Key takeaways:

Rural proofing is necessary to achieve the following objectives:

- Achieving a balance in policy making that is not solely focused on urban areas at all levels of governance.
- Supporting the competitiveness of rural areas.
- Addressing legislative shortcomings that pose a threat to balanced territorial development.
- Reversing the depopulation trend in rural areas.

The successful implementation of rural proofing relies on the political will of decision-makers. It requires dedicated time and effort to effectively integrate rural proofing into all levels of policy making. Furthermore, rural proofing cannot exist in isolation; there must be a shared understanding among different policy arenas and a concerted effort to harmonize policy agendas.



“The successful implementation of rural proofing relies on the political will of decision-makers.”

WORKSHOP : LEADER AND SIMPLIFICATION TALKING ABOUT SIMPLIFIED COST OPTIONS

SPEAKERS

- Peter Toth, European CAP network
- Alistair Prior, European CAP network
- Olavi Petron, Republic of Estonia Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture

Alistair Prior opened the workshop by presenting an overview of the lessons learned on simplification and on LEADER during the 2014-2020 programming period.



A survey was conducting during the session in order to receive feedbacks from the audience, but also to lead the discussions.

The case of Estonia and its various simplifications introduced by the Managing Authority for the 2023-2027 programming period were explained. Olavi Petron also gave details of the simplified cost options schemes introduced (flat rate for LAG support, budget-based lump sum for project support).

Regarding the future of simplification, various options were presented, including more digitalisation, more use of unit costs, and a shifting focus in the audits towards more consulting and less penalising.

Outcomes of the survey:

- Main types of simplified cost options used in Member States : flat rate (for direct staff costs), unit costs, flat rates (indirect costs), and lump sum.
- Most important type of support provided through simplified costs options: support for LAG running costs and animation, support for LEADER/CLLD projects. According to the participants' responses, SCOs are less used for preparatory support for LAGs and for preparatory support for transnational cooperation.



Key takeaways :

- In terms of the most effective approaches to simplification of LEADER, the element of trust is as a key precondition for any simplification.
- In terms of specific SCOs, the use of the lump sum, unit costs are the most prevalent. Advance payments and setting up a system of simplified cost options tailored to the specific types of activities are also emphasized.
- The Estonian model, the Rural Ticket Asturias (Spain), the combined use of SCOs for direct and indirect costs, and unit costs for specific investments (e.g., for solar panels, buildings) are the most prevalent examples given as good practises.

“The focus is not on whether the beneficiary does things only correctly, but rather on whether he also does the right things.”



WORKSHOP : THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SMART VILLAGES THROUGH LEADER

SPEAKERS

- Edina Ocsko - Smart village network
- Terry Stavropoulos, Joint Research Centre
- Maria Pianezzola, LAG Tradizione delle Terre Occitane (Province of Cuneo)
- Carlo Salot, LAG Escartons and Valli Valdesi (Province of Turin)

The goals of this session were to strengthen the understanding of smart and start-up villages, to inspire the audience to apply the concept in their country and join the movement, and to encourage member states to put smart villages in their strategies.

After a presentation on the key lessons learned from the Smart Rural 21 and Smart Rural 27 projects on the connections between LEADER and Smart Villages, Edina Ocska presented the definition of Smart Village and how LEADER could support the process through the animation of rural communities, the support of the strategy and Smart Village initiatives.

Katrina Idu also explained how Smart Villages are programmed under LEADER within the CAP Strategic Plans.

Maria Pianezzola and Carlo Salot rounded things off by presenting the example of the LAG of the Piedmont region in Italy, which supports Smart Villages through a specific LEADER intervention.

Terry Stravropoulos presented the new rural toolbox developed by the Joint Research Centre (JRC), and explained how to find information in the toolbox. The toolkit aims at supporting better access to different rural development funds for local communities and will be officially launched in February 2024.

A panel discussion took place between the speakers and the audience. It was also the opportunity to confront the theory with the reality, by asking the LAGs who is using the strategy and how they concretely combine it with LEADER. Questions were also focussing on knowing if multi-funding villages are implementing smart villages strategies. Czech Republic and Slovenia were taken as examples.

Key takeaways :

- Results & tools of Smart Rural projects could be used and applied also by LAGs to support Smart Villages. The Rural Toolkit developed by JRC is a useful tool to identify funds for Smart Villages and beyond for rural communities.
- Great that many LAGs included Smart Villages in their LDSs. It is important to enable exchange & use and follow up the R.40 (No. of strategies) as a result indicator by the member states.
- Data collection & coordination with research stakeholders and public authorities are important aspects of Smart Villages.
- Green transition & energy communities are key thematic areas of common interest for Smart Villages.
- Scaling up innovative projects to national level is important.

“We are happy to see that so many LAGs programmed Smart Villages in their LDSs. R.40 is an important result indicator that Member States should use.” (Commission representative)



WORKSHOP : DEVELOPING INTERACTIONS BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS - AND CLLD URBAN

SPEAKERS

- Florin Preda, urban LAG Radauti and Romanian Association of Urban LAGs
- Stefan Kah, Local Development Network, Ldnet
- Monika Smetanová, LAG Krajina srdce, Czech Republic

The workshop aimed at exploring and understanding rural-urban linkages, and to encourage rural development stakeholders exploring those links. It was also the opportunity to exchange best practice on how to strengthen rural-urban linkages.

After introducing the session by asking the participants what do they perceive as being urban, speakers took the example of the Congress of local and regional authorities to showcase the development of the urban-rural interplay.

To complete this, Florin Preda presented the urban Czech LAG Krajina srdce, and gave a description of the relationship between this LAG and the city of Tábor. He also explained how his LAG is supporting the establishment of the urban LAG: by offering to help the city to set up a urban LAG as well as to set up operations under the leader approach, but also by offering its experienced management to do the work of the urban LAG.

The highlight of this example is the synergies that are present in this connection, which would benefit the whole Tábor region.

During the discussion, participants mainly asked about the limit for the size of the city to be included in the LAG territory. Despite the fact that the limit is set up by the EU, it is each member state who decides. The allocation for LAGs is determined by the population density per square kilometer.



Key takeaways :

To conduct a dialogue with states across the EU and/or look for good practices examples when setting rules and criteria at the level of the member states that are supposed to implement EU policy in practice.

“Cooperation between urban and rural areas is necessary in order to create strong enough synergies necessary to ensure energy and food self-sufficiency.”



WORKSHOP : UNLOCKING POTENTIAL: ENHANCING IMPACT IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SPEAKERS

- Gerry Murray, Assembly of European Regions
- Wouter Peeters, Vlaamse Landmaatschappij
- Conor Judge, Nuffield College, University of Oxford
- Quentin Legouy, LAG Le Controis en Sologn

To explain LEADER contribution to rural development, Conor Judge presented his research, which is a high level overview of PhD work arguing for project level data, geospatial techniques & quantitative and statistical analysis. He highlighted that his study was compiling both a research background and the evaluation challenges in Rural Development evaluation with reference to Added Value of LEADER approach and Court of Auditor's Reports. The limits of current evaluation methods, such as the "Study to support the evaluation of the costs and benefits of implementing LEADER", were also discussed.

During his presentation, Conor Judge also explained the advantages of quantitative methods at project level, which are low cost, lower risk of sample selection, greater objectivity and greater size of data. To showcase the data process for creation of Project Level Data by geocoding and merging of census data, the example of Ireland was taken.

To end the presentation, Conor Judge highlighted with graphs various examples of the use of this type of analysis at LAG, national/regional and EU levels.

The discussions with the audience focused on the application of these methods to other member states, and on the possible future data sources that can confront the research challenges relating to LEADER.

Other main comments from the audience :

- What differences were found between programs and overtime?
- Can this be applied to other member states, other programs, other measures?
- Very interesting visualization of LEADER and could benefit our understanding of LEADER not just in Ireland, but across Europe.

Key takeaways:

- Evaluation using project level data is possible given advances in geospatial and statistical tools and should be utilized to a greater extent.
- Project level data in conjunction with micro-level statistics can address some of the research and evaluation challenges within CLLD programs through more objective analysis and less sample selection.

This can create a more rigorous evaluation process for LEADER programming and support other methods already employed. It can also confront positively the research challenge relating to added-value in LEADER (specifically social capital which shows preliminary positive results) and the aim of 'Bringing Europe closer to its citizens' through use of election data.

"How regions can meet territorial needs using LEADER" was the second topic raised during this workshop. With the case study on the use of LEADER in Mayo (Ireland), Gerry Murray highlighted the difficulty for LAGS to engage in the « bigger picture ». He also mentioned the existing gap between the LAGs focusing only on community development, and the ones focusing on regional objectives. Another time for discussions and brainstorming with the audience took place.

The main points of the discussions were on :

- the solutions to bridge this gap;
- the solutions to ensure subsidiarity in the design of the relevant programmes, for regions to meet territorial needs;
- the concerns about available fundings.

The workshop also focused on linking LAG Local Development strategies and regional needs. Wouter Peeters gave a presentation on that topic, using the example of Flanders and its new design framework to palliate the situation.

“There is much, much more we can learn from LEADER and the tools are now there to do it.”





WORKSHOP : HOW TO APPLY MULTI-FUND WITH LEADER - HEARING FROM SUCCESS STORIES

SPEAKERS

- Alistair Prior, European CAP network
- Peter Toth, European CAP network
- Marjeta Jeric, Slovenian Managing Authority
- Renáta Kučerová, CZ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, MA OP EMP+(ESF+)
- Simona Rulcová, CZ Ministry of Regional Development, MA IROP (ERDF)

By demystifying the use of multi funded CLLD and by showing concrete examples of the use of multi funded CLLD, the goal of workshop was to encourage and inspire the audience to start using multi-funded CLLD or in turn encourage their Managing Authority to do so.

Peter Toth from EU CAP Network highlighted the recent EU CAP Network workshop on multi funded CLLD. which provided opportunities for participants to exchange experiences and share practical solutions for improving the implementation of multi funded CLLD.

CASE STUDY : SLOVENIA

Overview presentation of the diverse activities done to harmonise a common approach for CLLD across the different funds:

- Participation to CLLD Governmental working group;
- Monitoring and following of the common regulation guidelines, to ensure that there was harmonisation;
- Participation to a joint public call for local development strategies.

Community Led Local Development (CLLD) is one of the so-called integrated instruments implemented in the Czech Republic, which includes municipalities with up to 25,000 inhabitants (rural areas). Czech municipal structure is quite fragmented with more than 6255 towns and villages. LAGs cover 95% of the country and are obliged to follow set standards in their settings and official processes, which must be observed by the LAG throughout the implementation of the SCLLD, or for the period of drawing support for the administrative capacity of the LAG from European funds.

In this new programming period, there is no LEADER fund; there are also changed requirements for simplification.

CLLD in the Czech Republic is multi-fund - support, granted from the funds - ERDF, ESF and EAFRD.

In Czech Republic, they are capitalising on LAG animation of rural areas where the focus is very much on capacity building.

EXAMPLE OF IROP

There are 2 priority axis for reallocating the funds :

- Strengthening community-led local development to improve the quality of life in rural areas and activate local potential (Transport - transfer terminals, low- and zero-emission means of transport, infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, Integrated Rescue System, Education - nursery, primary and secondary schools, leisure and lifelong learning, etc.)
- Strengthening the capacity of community-led local development (operational and animation activities of LAGs involved in the implementation of CLLD projects).

They support within the LAGS operations :

- a wide range of target groups living and working in rural areas, in their natural environment and in communities (seniors, families with children, persons with disabilities, long-term unemployed, informal carers, etc.) and,
- a wide range of activities (community work and community centres, social work in small municipalities, informal and shared care (and home hospice care), employment programmes on complex work with target groups (mentoring, social and psychological counselling, debts counselling, etc.), pro-family measures (children's clubs and camps, help for families with children in unfavourable situations, inter-generational activities etc.)).

MULTIFUND : good practices examples

- Chateau Třemešek managed by LAG Šumperský venkov. 3 funds are integrated: ERDF, EFRD and ESF.
- Day-care center in Dobříš managed by LAG Brdy – Vltava. 2 funds are integrated: ERDF and ESF.

Their approach to the implementation of multifund: ownership of CLLD operations within separate OPs, regular working meetings, capacity building and open dialogue.

Objective & Innovation: pilot Urban CLLD in 2024.

Key takeaways :

- Multi Funded CLLD can come in many forms
- Strong need to continue to support rural development
- The key aspects of success are:
 - Open communication and trust,
 - Mutual and continuous learning, capacity building and sharing good practices,
 - Good monitoring and evaluation to bring the evidence of the added value of LEADER/CLLD.
 - More debate about what is meant by multi funded CLLD.

“We appreciate the open dialogue and close cooperation with managing authorities.”

“Multi Funded CLLD can come in many forms.”

WORKSHOP : THE IMPORTANCE OF LAG MANAGERS IN THE SUCCESS OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

SPEAKERS

- Ana Manrique Morales, LAG Valles Pasiegos, Spain
- Rita Triinu Peussa, LAG Raplamaa Partnerluskoogu and Estonian Union of LAGs
- Michael Spada, LAG Îles et Estuaires Charentais, France
- Monika Smetanová, LAG Krajina srdce, Czech Republic
- François Galabrun, LAG PNR de la Narbonnaise en Méditerranée, France

The aim of this workshop was to highlight the importance of LAG managers in the success of Local Development strategies. This session aimed to be interactive, based on open discussions, sharing experiences and feedbacks from LAG managers, but also on the potential requirements and criteria needed to become one.

Each speaker presented his/her LAG and its structure, which varies from one to another. Main topics addressed and questions raised to the speakers during the discussions :

- The most useful tools used, by the panel of LAG managers, to engage with their communities ;
- A challenge they have had to bypass regarding LEADER implementation and how they succeeded in doing so;
- Personal tips to make a LAG successful;
- The involvement of youth in LAG.

Key takeaways :

- The LAG manager should master many skills: to estimate well the level of effort he/she is able to devote to LAG in order to eliminate the risk of burnout; he/she should have the ability to be creative and not to be afraid to take risks; being also a crisis manager, etc.
- It is an advantage to come from the LAG territory because of the relation to it, its knowledge and roots.
- In Czech Republic to involve youth, they have been organizing summer camps for children for almost 15 years, with the goal to “raise new LEADERS”; and there are already positive results.
- Lack of a field focused on LEADER at universities. In Czech Republic, there is an Academy at the National Leader Network, where it is possible to train new LAG employees.

“The LAGs are different in terms of structure, basic membership and experiences but on the other side they have a lot in common. We should talk more about failures that our LAG has had enough of. If we share these experiences, then we will be better able to prevent them or deal with them when they occur.”





MERRY CHRISTMAS

During the Christmas period, ELARD wanted to celebrate the festive season and invited each participant to come to the Conference with a small gift representing his/her nation. At the lunch break on the second day, the participants discovered the many gifts placed underneath the Christmas tree. Each participant who contributed to this Christmas tree was able to receive a gift in return from another nation.

It was a real moment of exchange and a testament to the cohesion between European countries. It was a friendly moment representative of the LEADER spirit.

THE LEADER SPIRIT WITHIN THE CONGRESS.



THANK YOU!



Thank you for making this possible.

Thank you for coming to Brussels for the 2023 European LEADER Congress.

Thank you for following the event through the webstreaming link.

Thank you to the speakers.

Thank you to the European Parliament.

Thank you to the European Committee of the Regions.

Thank you to the European Economic and Social Committee.

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Thank you LEADER.

Thank you Europe.



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ELARD

Avenue Reine Astrid 59B/9,
1780 Wemmel
BELGIUM
<http://elard.eu/>

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