Better LEADER practices for Local Development Strategies across the EU

This Infosheet is part of a series of relevant practice examples that Managing Authorities and Local Action Groups have used while implementing the LEADER approach in the 2007-2013 period. The series aims to extend the reach of rural development policy by highlighting what works well in the design and delivery phase of Local Development Strategies (LDS).

Using participatory methodologies to design quality Local Development Strategies

N.12

Country, Region: Italy, Sardinia

Organisation: Italian National Rural Network (NRN), LEADER Task Force

A T   A   G L A N C E

Objectives

The bottom-up element of the LEADER approach implies that Local Development Strategies (LDS) are designed and implemented with the active participation of local actors. In order to promote wide knowledge of participatory planning methods and tools, several Local Action Groups (LAGs) used the Problem Tree Analysis methodology to determine the LDS strategy and during implementation to define the progress of the actions undertaken.

Key elements of the approach

The Problem Tree Analysis methodology is a technique that turns problems into solutions which can subsequently be framed into a strategy with well-defined targets and monitoring indicators.

Lessons learnt

This methodology helps to create momentum that binds individuals through the LEADER vision; it reinforces the sense of belonging and of active participation in a LAG, and allows sufficient time for LAGs to activate consultation processes during the LDS preparation and implementation phase.

Objectives and background

The bottom-up approach is one of the seven key principles of LEADER; it means that local actors should participate in the design and implementation of the LDS.

Although LEADER is now on its fourth generation, knowledge of participatory planning methods and tools for

> *Please find a reference to PTA method through the Italian NRN's website:*
>
> - How to use the Problem Tree Analysis for the preparation of the LDS - presentations by Carlo Ricci, Annalisa Motzo (LAG Margine) and Pasquale Sulis at the LAG start-up laboratory are available here (in Italian).
> - Document on how to use the Problem Tree Analysis for the operational definition of the actions planned within the local development strategies is available here (in Italian).

stakeholder engagement are not widespread enough.

When selecting participatory planning methodologies and tools, elements that are crucial for LEADER cannot be ignored, such as the:

- **Time factor** - LDS preparation and the design of actions to be implemented have defined deadlines;

- A**vailable** b**udget -** LAGs have detailed financial plans for the implementation of activities;

- **Transparent decision-making** - LAGs need to ensure they take into account the different characteristics of the actors involved from different sectors in the process.

Noting all of these LEADER elements, the use of the Problem Tree Analysis methodology has been promoted by the Italian National Rural Network's LEADER Task Force and explained to LAGs during several training workshops.

Key elements of the approach

The **Problem Tree Analysis** (PTA) methodology is a technique that turns problems into solutions that can subsequently be framed into a strategy with well-defined targets and monitoring indicators. This technique includes three main phases:

1. Definition of the current situation and identification of problem areas

to work on and related fact-finding;

2. Definition of the desired situation (the solutions tree);

3. Creation of strategy to move from the current to the desired situation (logical framework). The problems have to be replaced, one-by-one, with realistic solutions that provide the best outcome.

Several LAGs have chosen to use the PTA methodology to design their LDS and to monitor progress during implementation, because it:

- promotes active participation of local stakeholders through the building of shared analysis and visions;

- maps the path from general objective to specific, prioritised individual interventions and the actions to be implemented;

- facilitates the development and regular use of self-diagnosis tools; and

- requires minimal development costs and takes a relatively short time to involve a high number of stakeholders.

Communication aspects

The Italian NRN had to raise awareness of this participatory methodology and provide information to the general public and stakeholders about its use during various workshops and trainings on LEADER opportunities and participation in the LDS design.

Lessons learnt

Benefits

This methodology helps to:

- create momentum that binds individuals through the LEADER vision;

- reinforce the sense of belonging and of active participation in a specific organisation (such as a LAG);

- disseminate a development culture; and

- create an efficient working atmosphere and obtain active cooperation in the work to be done by adapting relational behaviour.

Barriers

The activity did not create any burdens for LAGs, since it did not generate additional costs for them. The NRN's resources were used to support LAGs with training activities, including methodological experts and supporting materials.

In the case of the Sardinia Region, the Managing Authority has chosen to give additional support to the LAGs by assigning mentors to them. Actions were covered from the Technical Assistance of the Sardinian Rural Development Programme.

Lessons learnt

Based on the Italian experience, in order to favour the use of such methodologies by the LAG is important to:

• allow sufficient time for the LAGs to activate consultation processes during the LDS preparation phase;

• monitor (using appropriate indicators) the implementation by the LAG of such activities both during the LDS selection and subsequently during LDS implementation;

• provide adequate financial advance to the LAGs for the implementation of its activities;

• advances for immaterial operations should be eligible (training, cooperation, events, etc.).

The information included in this Infosheet is primarily coming from case studies carried out within the ENRD Focus Group 4 on Better Local Development Strategies. It has been compiled by the Contact Point on the basis of the information collected in the EU Member States and regions and takes into account views expressed by the Focus Group. This notwithstanding, the content does not necessarily reflect the official position of the EU institutions and national authorities.