

## GERMANY LUXEMBURG

# Transnational cooperation

### Location

Rhineland-Palatinate (Germany) and Luxembourg

### Programming period

2007 - 2013

### Funding (EUR)

n/a

### Duration

2012 – 2014

### Implemented by

Ministry of Environment,  
Rhineland-Platine

### Contact

[franz-josef.strauss@mulewf.rlp.de](mailto:franz-josef.strauss@mulewf.rlp.de)

### Website

[www.mulewf.rlp.de](http://www.mulewf.rlp.de)

**Setting up the first transnational LEADER region in Europe, thus allowing the elaboration of a common strategy between LAGs, and include provisions for more sound financial management of and implementation of TNC projects.**

## The challenge

The “Greater Region” covering parts of Luxembourg, Germany, Belgium and France, is one of many areas in Europe, where cross-border activities are inherent part of daily life. The Local Action Groups (LAGs) collaborate across regional and national borders within individual LEADER transnational cooperation (TNC) projects. Two LAGs from Germany and Luxembourg strived for a more strategic approach of collaboration and asked the Managing Authorities (MAs) to jointly find a solution for designing the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) accordingly. Following preparatory phases in the funding period 2014-2020, the first transnational LEADER region in Europe was founded. The RDPs concerned do not only allow for the elaboration of a common strategy of two LAGs, but include also provisions for more sound financial management of and implementation of TNC projects.

## Main steps and features

Stimulated by a high number of LEADER cooperation projects of the LAGs in Rhineland-Pfalz in the funding period 2007-2013, a change was made to the RDP. Thus the opportunity was created that the rules of that RDP which relate to the lead LAG are applied within TNC projects. At the end of the former funding period several LAGs in that Bundesland indicated that they would like to strive for closer cross-border cooperation with German or foreign neighbouring LAGs in other RDP areas. Among them were the LAGs Moselfranken and Miselerland, for which the following steps for the initiation of the foundation of an EU-LAG can be drawn:

- **11/2012** The council of the county in which the German LAG is located invited all municipalities concerned from both countries for first discussions around the idea of forming a joint LEADER region.
- **01/2013** The LAGs sent a strategy paper on their plans to the Managing Authorities in charge; at the same time at political level, on the German side a letter was sent to the responsible minister of Rhineland-Platine.
- **07/2013** Meeting of LAG managers
- **Summer 2013** Communication of this topic within the LAGs and survey among LAG members
- **11/2013** Decision by the LAGs to go ahead with the formation of a joint LEADER region
- **01/2014** Meeting with the Managing Authorities
- **Spring 2014** Set-up of a transnational steering group for the elaboration of a Local Development Strategy
- **03/2014** First “Future workshop” (Zukunftswerkstatt) involving the people from the region
- **10/2014** Finalisation of the Regional Development Strategy
- **2015** Both LAGs are selected and the EU-LAG can take up its work

In parallel, the Managing Authorities concerned sought solutions for programming the RDPs smoothly in such a manner that they would allow for the formation of cross-border LAGs and an administratively simple way of implementing cooperation projects. This was also the subject of meetings of the LEADER-Coordinators of all German Managing Authorities. The Managing Authority of Rhineland-Pfalz started the exchange on possible RDP programming approaches with representatives of the EU

Commission in a timely manner, to ensure that the final chosen approach was compliant with EU legislation, in order that the LAGs could plan cross-border activities accordingly even before the approval of the RDP. In Rhineland-Platine the approach was also discussed with social and economic partners. The RDP was approved in May 2015, when the LAGs had already preparing their joint Local Development Strategy.

### Results

For the funding period 2014-2020 the RDP of Rhineland-Platine includes the element of an “EU-LAG across RDPs”, which covers parts of at least two RDP areas and has one Local Development Strategy for its region. An EU-LAG can also be founded, if two neighboring LAGs from different RDP areas cooperate and have a joint strategy, provided that both LAGs are selected. In the RDP it is stipulated that for founding an EU-LAG also the other RDP concerned has to foresee the foundation of an EU-LAG. Furthermore, either the Managing Authorities accept the provisions of the RDP which dominates the region of the EU-LAG, or projects are implemented following the provisions of the RDP, which relates to the lead LAG.

The two LAGs Moselfranken and Misererland elaborated jointly an integrated strategy and were both selected. Thus, with the funding period 2014-2020 the first EU-LAG was founded and a model for a cross-border region has been created. Despite the provision that RDPs would have allowed the foundation of an EU-LAG with a single seat, these two LAGs rely on two decision-making bodies and two budgets, and cooperation projects are implemented following the provisions of the RDP of the lead LAG. In that way, for the cooperating LAGs, simplification has already been achieved. For instance, if within one project actors from both LAGs undertake a business trip, for all participants the kilometre flat rate is reimbursed following the provisions of the of the RDP of the lead LAG , in which the project promoter is located. Before this rule was introduced into the RDPs, it had to differ between participants applying different kilometre flat rates for participants from Germany and Luxembourg, despite all travelling costs have been paid from the same project budget.

For Paying Agencies this approach might imply that a part of the controls of expenditure is conducted by another accredited paying agency.

Despite the proposal from the national level that in all German regional RDPs the provisions for simplified implementation of cooperation projects are taken up, the approach that a Managing Authority recognizes the conditions of the RDP, under which the lead LAG is supported, has not been introduced into the RDPs in all Bundesländer. One reason for this is the fear that own RDP resources could be spent in other RDP areas.

From the perspective of both the administration and the LAGs, such form of (transnational) cross-border cooperation has to be initiated timely and be implemented step by step:

- For programming cooperation “across RDPs” preparatory phases are needed and Managing Authorities have to attune their RDPs.
- The views of people in the region have to be taken on board when striving for closer collaboration between LAGs, where communication is essential. – Setting up a cross-border LAG with one decision-making body and a joint budget, might be one step too far at the beginning and the first lessons from the collaboration under a joint Local Development Strategy might be drawn.
- The approach for LAGs’ cooperation across RDPs whereby only the rules of the RDP where the lead LAG is located should be applied is likely to lead to administrative simplification.
- National legislation, for instance on national accounts, can interfere with the approach of supporting a LEADER regional development strategy, which covers parts of two RDP areas.
- Political will at local, but also at RDP, i.e. at regional or national level, is likely to mobilise efforts and encourage to face administrative challenges.