



PATHWAYS TO LEADER

A guide to getting the
LEADER approach up and
running in the Western
Balkans, Turkey and beyond

**Including the use of the Instrument of Pre-
Accession Assistance to Rural Development**



Disclaimer: this publication was prepared on the basis of contributions from experts in the respective fields in a number of Member States, certain candidate countries and within the services of the European Commission. It does not reflect necessarily the official position of the European Commission.



Dear Reader,

The European Commission is actively promoting the LEADER approach to rural development in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

This publication offers you guidance on how to apply this locally led, bottom up approach to development in rural areas. LEADER has been in operation for over 25 years in the EU, and it has been recognised worldwide as best practice when it comes to empowering local communities to actively design and implement their own development strategies.

At its heart, the LEADER method is not just about delivering EU funding; it aims to mobilise women, young people, private and public stakeholders, the social partners and the non-governmental sector (NGOs) to participate actively in the development of their local rural areas.

The European Commission is encouraging this approach to rural development in the Western Balkans and Turkey through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to Rural Development (IPARD).

IPARD can support the creation and consolidation of Local Action Groups and their strategies in Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. I hope that the examples outlined in this publication can inspire local communities to come together and identify their local development potential. I encourage the authorities in these countries to make use of the possibilities

for promoting and supporting dynamic local initiatives. In this way, you can share the experience and lessons learnt in EU rural development programmes over the past twenty five years.

I would like to thank the experts from Bulgaria, Poland, Croatia and Slovenia, who gathered for the TAIEX workshops in Zagreb in November 2016 and in Pravets in May 2017, and who agreed to share their experiences reflected in this publication.

I am very satisfied to note the interest of the national authorities in the Western Balkans and Turkey, civil society organisations and national rural development networks in the possibilities which LEADER offers.

I encourage you to read this very useful and practical publication, take lessons from the experience of others who have set up LEADER groups in their rural communities and use this as a guide for similar initiatives in the Western Balkans, Turkey and beyond.

PHIL HOGAN
COMMISSIONER FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

The purpose of this publication is to share knowledge on setting up and encouraging bottom-up initiatives in rural areas using the LEADER method. It shares experience on how to establish Local Actions Groups (LAGs) and how to define effective Local Development Strategies (LDS). It also emphasises the importance of continually motivating the groups once they are established. Finally, it points out how the EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance in Rural Development (IPARD) can be used to support implementation of these strategies.

The focus is mainly on IPARD in the context of the Western Balkans and Turkey, but the methodology can be used elsewhere, for example in Kosovo¹, Bosnia and Hercegovina, the Neighbourhood countries and beyond.

The publication reflects the past experience of the EU Member States, especially those which joined the EU after 2004, and also some limited experience of the present applicant countries.

It is a follow-up to two TAIEX workshops on capacity building for LEADER in Zagreb, Croatia (15-16 November 2016) and in Pravets, Bulgaria (30-31 May 2017). Special credits are due to Joanna Gierulska (Ministry of Agriculture, Poland), Ryszard Kaminski (Rural Forum, Poland), Goran Soster (PREPARE asbl, Belgium), Stefan Spasov (Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Bulgaria) for their contributions.

Publication based on TAIEX² workshops “LEADER capacity building for the Western Balkans and Turkey”, 15-16 November 2016, Croatia and “Use of IPARD measure Technical assistance”, 30-31 May 2017, Bulgaria

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

² **TAIEX** is the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument of the European Commission. TAIEX supports public administrations with regard to the approximation, application and enforcement of EU legislation as well as facilitating the sharing of EU best practice

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INTRODUCTION

In this Section you will find out:

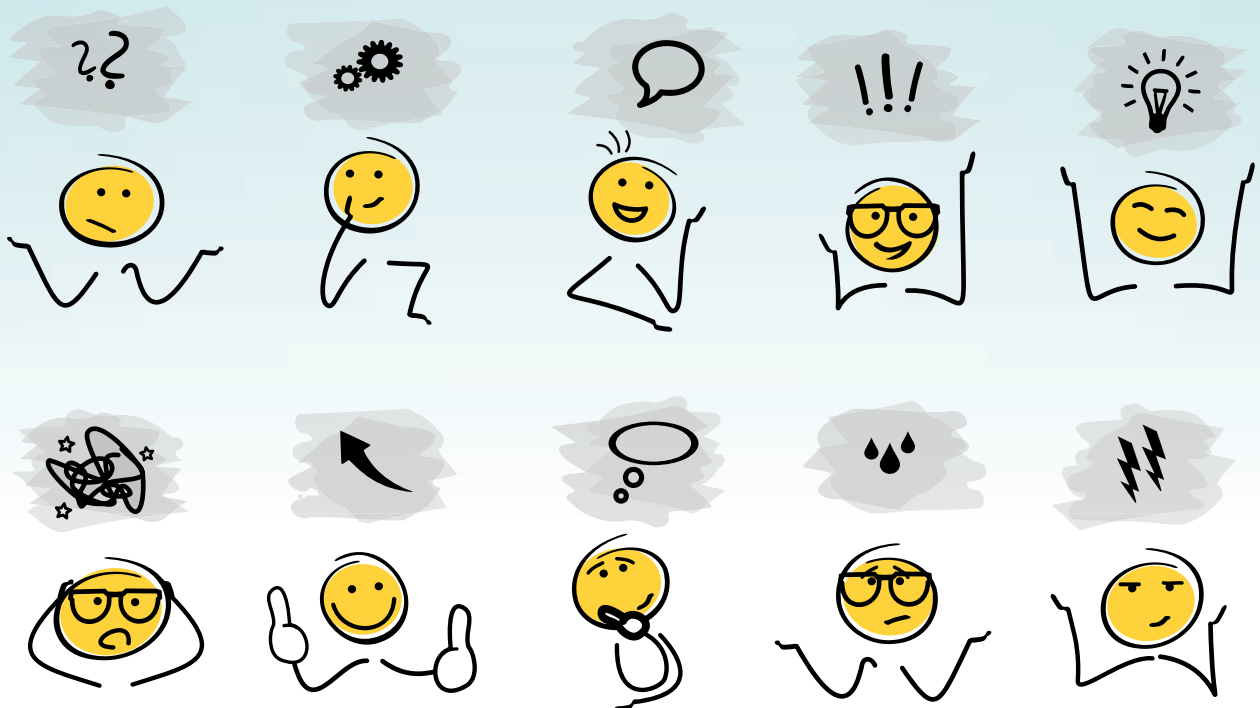
What is the LEADER approach to rural development?

What is the IPARD Programme?

How can the IPARD Programme support the LEADER approach?

What are the main institutions involved in the LEADER approach?

What are the key stages in setting up LEADER?



First Things First!

What is the LEADER approach to rural development?

The acronym “LEADER” derives from the French words “Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l’Économie Rurale” which means, “Links between the rural economy and development actions”. The idea is to mobilise the energy and resources of people and organisations and to encourage partnerships at a sub-regional level between the public, private and civil sectors. In 1990, when the European Commission proposed LEADER, this concept of “bottom-up” development led by people in the local area, was quite new, in contrast to the traditional “top-down” approach to development.

The LEADER approach is associated with local empowerment through local strategy development and resource allocation. Central to the LEADER approach to area development and involvement of local people in decision-making is the Local Action Group (LAG).

In the experimental phase in 1991-93, LEADER involved 217 regions, focusing on disadvantaged rural areas. This was also true for the period 1994-1999. In 2000-2006, based on the encouraging results, the method quickly expanded to cover all types of rural areas. In its fourth programming period (2007-2013), the approach was mainstreamed as an integral part of the EU’s rural development policy, covering 2402 rural territories across the Member States. The method has also extended thematically to fisheries policy with some 300 FLAGs in that sector.

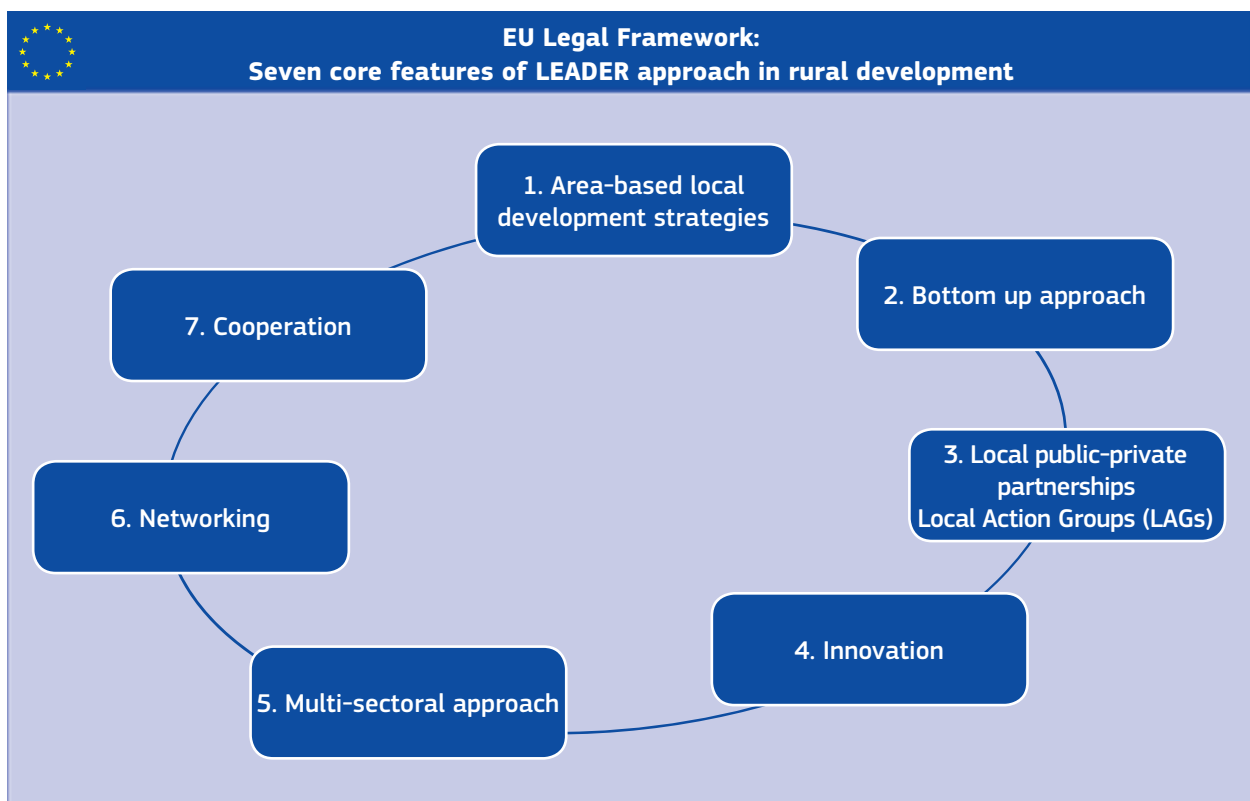
In the period 2014-2020, there are some 2,600 local action groups drive Community-Led Local Development groups (CLLD) implementing their local development strategies not only using rural development funds but with an option to involve also regional development, social and maritime and fisheries funds. This enables local action groups to address local needs and solutions and helps reinforce the links between rural, urban and fisheries areas.

Feature 1: Area-based local development strategies

An area-based approach takes a small, homogenous, socially cohesive territory, often characterised by common traditions, a local identity, a sense of belonging or common needs and expectations, as the target area for policy implementation. Having such an area as a reference facilitates the recognition of local strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities, endogenous potential and the identification of major bottlenecks for sustainable development. Area-based essentially means local.

Feature 2: Bottom-up approach

The bottom-up approach means that people from the community participate in decision-making about the development strategy and in the selection of the priorities to be pursued in their local area. Experience has shown that



the bottom-up approach should not be considered as an alternative or opposed to “top-down” approaches from national and/or regional authorities, but rather as complementary to them, in order to achieve better overall results.

Feature 3: Public–private partnerships: The local action groups (LAGs)

Setting up a local partnership, known as a “Local Action Group” (LAG), is a key component of the LEADER approach. The local action group has the task of identifying and implementing a local development strategy, making decisions about the allocation of its financial resources and managing them.

Feature 4: Facilitating innovation

LEADER can play a valuable role in stimulating new and innovative approaches to the development of rural areas. This is encouraged by allowing local action groups wide margins of freedom and flexibility in making decisions about the actions they want to support. Innovation needs to be understood in a broad sense. It may mean the introduction of a new product, a new process, a new organisation or a new market. This common definition of innovation is valid for rural as well as for urban areas. However, rural areas, because of their low population density and often relatively limited levels of human and physical resources, have weaker linkages with research and development centres and may find it difficult to produce radical innovations, although this is of course possible. Innovation in rural areas may imply the transfer and adaptation of innovations developed elsewhere, the modernisation of traditional forms of know-how, or finding new solutions to persistent rural problems which other policy initiatives have not been able to solve in a satisfactory way. Innovation can provide new responses to the specific problems of rural areas.

Feature 5: Integrated and multi-sectoral actions

LEADER is not a sectoral development programme, but instead seeks to integrate several sectors of activity. The actions and projects contained in local development



Culinary heritage is closely linked with the local territory – gorges dessert in Turkey (photo: courtesy of Turkish Ministry of Agriculture)

strategies should be linked and coordinated as a coherent whole. Most importantly, integration means links between the different economic, social, cultural, environmental players and sectors involved.

Feature 6: Networking

Networking includes the exchange of achievements, experiences and know-how between LEADER groups, rural areas, administrations and organisations involved in rural development within the EU and beyond, whether or not they are direct LEADER beneficiaries. Networking is a means of transferring good practice, of disseminating innovation and of building on lessons learned from local rural development.

Feature 7: Cooperation

Cooperation goes further than networking. It involves a local action group undertaking a joint project with another LEADER group, or with a group taking a similar approach, in another region, Member State, or even third country.

What is IPARD 2014–2020?

IPARD is the European Union’s Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to Rural Development. Currently the countries using this instrument are Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. Assistance is provided on the basis of a multi-annual programme, known as the “IPARD Programme”. This contains a set of measures to improve the competitiveness of the agri-food sector and rural areas, and prepare the


applicant countries to implement the Common Agricultural Policy after accession. Each country is free to choose which of the proposed measures to implement depending on its national priorities for the sector. Beneficiary countries establish national institutions such as a Managing Authority and an IPARD Agency, to which the European Commission subsequently gives the right to manage the programme. The programmes are then regularly audited by national

audit authorities, the European Commission and sometimes the European Court of Auditors.

IPARD programmes provide grants mostly for **investments in physical assets of agricultural holdings, marketing and processing of agricultural products, diversification of economic activities and rural business development and rural infrastructure. LEADER approach, technical assistance, pilot projects in agri-environment, training, advisory**

services can also be supported. All projects are co-financed also from the national budgets. Private recipients must provide own financial contribution to the supported investment projects. Detailed eligibility conditions and selection criteria are set out in the country's programmes. Applications are received, assessed, approved and projects are controlled and eventually paid by the national IPARD institutions. Please see contacts details of the national IPARD institutions at the end of this publication.

How can the IPARD Programme support the LEADER approach?



**EU Legal Framework:
IPARD SUPPORT FOR LEADER**

IPARD programmes can support the LEADER approach under two measures reflecting two stages of LEADER development:

1. the IPARD measure "Technical Assistance" for preparatory stages;
2. the IPARD measure "Implementation of Local Development Strategies – LEADER approach" for more advanced stages for selected mature Local Action Groups with strategies to support

During the preparatory steps under IPARD measure Technical Assistance, the key role is played by the Managing Authority, which plans activities to develop the LEADER approach in the country. This support is then delivered by a contractor. This publication aims to help the Managing Authority to best plan this process.

At the next step under the LEADER-like measure, funding is channelled directly to the Local Action Groups (LAGs) selected via a competitive process as in the Member States (for details see Step 4 in this Guide).

IPARD's support to LEADER approach to rural development

Steps 1-3	<p>Preparatory actions / capacity building for LEADER</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. animation, publicity, information 2. (support to) identification and formation of Local Action Groups 3. (support to) establishment of Local Development Strategies 	<p>IPARD measure: "<i>Technical assistance</i>"</p> <p>Activity: Acquisition of skills and animating the inhabitants of rural territories</p>	<p>Managing Authority contracts services for the benefit of rural territories/potential Local Action Groups</p>
Step 4	<p>For selected Local Action Groups (LAGs):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acquisition of skills, animating the inhabitants of LAG territories 2. Running costs and small projects 3. Cooperation projects for inter territorial or transnational cooperation 	<p>IPARD measure: "<i>Implementation of Local Development Strategies – LEADER approach</i>"</p>	<p>(selected) Local Action Groups (LAGs) receive funding for animation, running costs, small projects and cooperation projects</p>

What are the main institutions involved in the LEADER approach?

Under LEADER, partnerships of public and private entities play a key role. Many institutions and bodies are engaged in LEADER and good cooperation between them and a clear division of roles and tasks is crucial for the ultimate success. Their roles under IPARD are similar to that in the EU and can be described as follows:

Role of the Managing Authority

The Managing Authority, generally, located within a Ministry of Agriculture, is a policy maker and its main job is to establish a well-designed and practical system for LEADER in line with EU rules, national policy priorities and the national legal system. The Managing Authority is also engaged in the LEADER implementation by planning capacity building, training, publicity and information, issuing guidance and to some extent, controlling activities.

The Managing Authority organises also the selection process of Local Action Groups. Finally, it monitors the implementation in line with the set indicators.

The Managing Authority plans and contracts services under the Technical Assistance measure.

Role of the Paying Agency (IPARD Agency)

The IPARD Agency (Paying Agency) checks the eligibility criteria (of the Local Action Groups) and signs contracts with the selected ones. It also performs control activities (administrative and on the spot). It processes payment claims from Local Action Groups, transfers funding to recipients accounts for expenditure.

Role of Local Action Groups (LAGs)

A Local Action Group is made up of people from the local community as well as from the local public and private sector. This group establishes and implements the local development strategy. They raise awareness and facilitate communication on LEADER and conduct capacity building activities in their area.

In the candidate countries, the Local Action Groups provide a letter of recommendation for IPARD projects if the latter are compliant with the Local Development Strategy. On this basis these projects get extra points in the ranking criteria under respective IPARD measures.

This is different compared to the EU Member States where the Local Action Groups select projects for funding from their “own” budgets.

In IPARD the Local Action Groups design and implement “small projects”. They are generally smaller in value than other IPARD projects.

Role of local and regional authorities within the Local Action Groups

Local and regional governments represent the public interest in the group. With strong human and financial expertise, the public authorities may have a certain advantage. However, EU legislation assures that they do not dominate the partnership because their participation in the decision making body is clearly defined.



Albania: discussing tourism potential of Skrapar municipality (photo: courtesy of Albanian Rural Development Network)

Role of local non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

Non-governmental organisations represent groups of citizens with a common specific interest, for example, agricultural producers, environmental protection associations, etc. Often these interests are competing with each other and with other public or economic sectors. Projects prepared by NGOs tend to be predominantly in the tourism, cultural, environmental or social domains. NGOs interests are specific and usually limited to their particular area of work. Having an efficient civil sector improves the

quality of life of specific interest groups, which increases the variety and richness of rural society.

Private stakeholders

Private stakeholders such as farmers or rural businesses are the key members of the Local Action Groups.

Other stakeholders

Research organisations, educational institutions, community organisations, etc. are members of LAGs.

What are the key stages in setting up the LEADER approach?

Building a bottom-up approach is a long term process, which often starts by itself in a very informal way far away from any policy support. Local leaders are already active in their communities, often on a voluntary basis, and with very limited if any financial support. These are people who can change the environment and motivate others to follow

them. They have vision, ideas and imagination. LEADER taps into this dynamic for EU rural development policy delivery.

The stages involved in supporting the LEADER process, described in this Guide can be summarised as follows:

MAIN STEPS IN SETTING UP THE LEADER APPROACH TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT



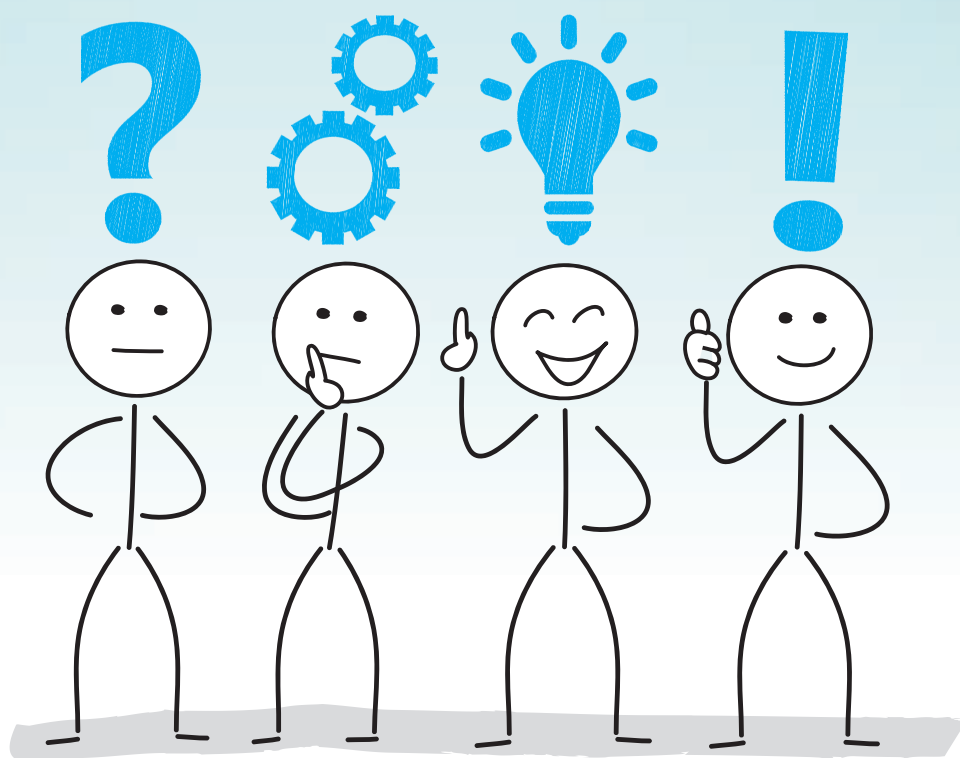
STEP 1 PREPARING THE GROUND FOR THE LEADER APPROACH

In Step 1 you will find out:

What is capacity building for LEADER?

Who are the local LEADER animators?

How to train LEADER animators?



No Time to Lose!

What is capacity building for LEADER?

Based on contribution of Joanna Gierulska, Polish Ministry of Agriculture

The capacity building process lies at the heart of the LEADER approach as competent and committed people are key to its success. Thus, LEADER depends heavily on “**social capital**”. The term has many specific definitions but broadly relates to the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively. It is characterised by trust, cooperation, and collective goods. Social capital is generally seen as **one of the most essential factors of the development process**. It needs years to grow. A well designed learning process is particularly important for areas with lower levels of social capital, for example in the former post-communist states.

Thus, the capacity building process starts well before IPARD assistance is available. Local communities have their way of working together (or not), forming trustful relations, setting objectives, organising themselves into community organisations, leading locally. Willingness to act together locally is not just a matter of the socio-historical past but can be encouraged by wider decentralisation, support to more participative planning or development of local leadership.

As the countries begin to prepare for IPARD and the LEADER approach, it is important that all the key stakeholders such as government, regional and local administrations, local communities, leaders and local action groups perceive **LEADER as a long-term participatory development concept** and not merely a mechanism of disbursing funds. If this understanding is not developed at the outset, it is very hard to install it later. Only a truly bottom-up approach can demonstrate the added value of LEADER. This is why it is worthwhile to allocate significant resources to capacity building on an ongoing basis.

Before planning a “capacity building process” it is useful to reflect at a more conceptual level on what the capacity building process actually tries to achieve. At a deeper social or personal level, it involves **understanding the obstacles** that inhibit people from realizing their development goals. At the same time, it is about **enhancing the abilities** that will allow them to achieve measurable and sustainable results.

Capacity building in LEADER concerns three target groups:

- Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies
- Local communities
- Local Actions Groups and local leaders

The scope of training for local communities depends on the starting point. The process (including timing and budget) will be very different in an area with well-established social capital and an area with few civil society organisations or NGOs. Thus, the training goes far beyond the concept of LEADER alone. It covers building social capital, supporting people to organise themselves and foster local initiatives. Training for local leaders (and later of local action groups) should be even wider. They need to have the skills necessary to draft, implement and monitor the strategy but above all, to mobilise and communicate with people.

A comprehensive capacity building strategy needs to emerge through a dialogue with all the stakeholders, based on a common understanding of the main concepts and objectives. The Managing Authority plans and follows up the capacity building against clearly set indicators. Regular meeting with animators (local action group leaders) can also be useful to monitor progress on the ground and adjust the process if necessary.



Learning together, Honey Festival, Poland (photo: courtesy of Polish Ministry of Agriculture)

STARTING THE LEADER APPROACH TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT (EXAMPLE OF BULGARIA)

Based on contribution of Stefan Spasov, Bulgaria, Ministry of Agriculture

The introduction of the LEADER approach in Bulgaria started in the early 2000s (still before Bulgarian EU accession in 2007) almost from a blank page.

At first, different donor programmes financed general information campaigns. A crucial step was the emergence of 11 potential Local Action Groups and a training of 50 animators under a UNDP³ project. This early preparation was rather theoretical, supported with a very small budget and limited in scale. As a follow-up the Bulgarian Foundation for Local Development (FLGR) and the Ministry of Agriculture joined forces and promoted cooperation between municipalities (especially the smaller ones), and public-private partnerships to develop local strategies in five pilot areas.



Bringing people together – folk dance ensemble from Rakovski town at a LEADER event

exchange with the EU Member States was an important motivating factor at this stage. The animators spent between 11 and 20 months on the ground. Up to 40% of budgets was allocated to information and animation.

After accession, the first Bulgarian rural development programme included a measure to prepare LEADER. The process was as follows:

Stage 1: Inception phase (most input and initiative from the Managing Authority)

The Managing Authority planned the whole process and trained 138 animators in Local Action Groups establishment and management, strategy elaboration as well as more generally, animation. At this stage, the animators acted as mediators between the local community and the central administration. They effectively worked on the establishment of Local Action Groups under the guidance of the Managing Authority. Each of the selected potential Local Action Groups appointed a coordinator and an assistant from the local community, who were to become permanent staff of the local action group later on.

Stage 2: Mobilising the local communities

This stage was mostly delivered via the trained animators. They made a stakeholder analysis, including the identification of opinion leaders. A lot of emphasis was placed on teaching the key stakeholders how to effectively cooperate together. Many conferences and workshops were organized to promote a deeper understanding of the LEADER concept. Intensive

Cooperation between the Managing Authority, Paying Agency and the Local Action Groups and within the Local Action Groups themselves was sometimes challenging. High staff turnover, mostly within the Local Action Groups but also within the central administration also led to difficulties. Some beneficiaries could not implement the contracted activities due to poor financial capacities or poor organization within Local Action Groups. Nevertheless, the results were encouraging and the foundations for LEADER in Bulgaria were laid down.

Measure “Acquiring skills and social activities on the territories of potential LAGs”

- Training of 138 of local animators
- 102 contracts concluded (total of 8.4 million EUR), out of which 90 executed successfully
- Maximum amount per preparatory project – 100 000 EUR (maximum 60% for running costs and at least 40% for animation)
- Main eligible activities (with ceilings per each activity):
 - coordinator (approx. 100 EUR/day) and assistant salaries (300 – 400 EUR/month)
 - external experts (100 – 200 EUR/day)
 - analyses of territory (3 500 – 7 000 EUR)
 - trainings (500 – 1000 EUR), study visits (5 000 – 7 000 EUR)
 - publications, information materials (leaflets, brochures), films (1 000 EUR)
 - administrative costs: consumables, stationery, offices rents and equipment (10 000 – 15 000 EUR)
- Output: 90 Local Action Groups formed and 90 local development strategies prepared

³ United Nations Development Programme

LEADER capacity building at various steps of the process

	Key areas of capacity building	Key target groups	Main sources of financial support (if any)
STEP 1: PREPARING THE GROUND	Wider general training leading to improvement of social capital, such as: encouragement of collective initiatives, participative planning, reinforcement of civil society sector and cooperation (incl. conflict management) between public and private actors	Civil society Public authorities Opinion leaders in rural areas	National funding Multilateral and bilateral assistance Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), incl. capacity building for central administration and funding for civil sector
	General awareness of LEADER concept		
	Identification and extended training for local leaders/animators	Local leaders	IPARD Technical Assistance measure (other sources also possible)
	Exploring legal aspects	Managing Authority	
STEP 2 IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL LOCAL ACTION GROUPS	Targeted LEADER publicity to confirm engagement of selected areas in building LEADER;	Regional and local authorities	IPARD Technical Assistance measure (Other sources also possible)
	Stakeholders analysis in selected areas – initiating the development of partnerships More in-depth information on LEADER (incl. practical and legal aspect) to selected areas	Wide range of local stakeholders in areas with potential interest in setting up Local Action Groups	
	Preparation of LEADER procedures for accreditation (incl. legal, financial, controls, etc).	Managing Authority IPARD Agency Representatives of Local Action Groups consulted	IPA institution building IPARD Technical Assistance measure (other sources also possible)
STEP 3 PREPARATION OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES BY LOCAL ACTION GROUPS	Participative planning / building local development strategy	Local Action Group members	IPARD Technical Assistance measure
	Animation techniques Monitoring and evaluation	Animators	(other sources also possible)
	General consultation on the strategy	Inhabitants of the areas for which the strategies are prepared	

	Key areas of capacity building	Key target groups	Main sources of financial support (if any)
STEP 4 IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES BY LOCAL ACTION GROUPS	Dissemination of the local development strategy to inhabitants of local areas	Local Action Group members	IPARD measure “Implementation of local development strategies – LEADER approach”
	Specialist training in areas selected for the local strategy	Key stakeholders and inhabitants of Local Action Group areas	(other sources also possible)
	Project identification Project management Project assessment Financial management	Local Action Group staff Animators	
	Improvement of procedures Improvement of quality of implementation	Managing Authority IPARD Agency	

Who are the local LEADER animators?

Based on the contribution of Ryszard Kaminski Polish Rural Forum

The LEADER approach is centred around the local partnerships. No matter on whose initiative the creation process of the Local Action Group begins, the key role in building the real partnership is played by the leaders of the process, and their animators.

*“Animators encourage the activity and trigger linkages between people, groups and institutions in public space. Thanks to this the animator enables people to join in consuming and also producing public goods. The animator changes people’s attitude from passive to active and towards civil participation directed to cooperation. By doing so, the animator releases the inner energy of a given community”.*⁴

“(an animator is) a person responsible for the process of a good partnership building and ensuring its effective functioning”

Source: Ros Tennyson and Luke Wilde, „Guiding Hand”

The experience in the EU suggests that most animators come from civil society. There they work effectively on behalf of local communities and demonstrate competences in cooperation with public institutions (mostly local authorities) and are able to encourage local entrepreneurs to join in the partnerships. There are also examples when people from the public sector initiate or even animate the partnerships, for example officials in charge of cooperation with non-governmental organisations. Some partnerships, although it is relatively rare, are set-up by business people or business organisations.

The personal competences of the animators are crucial to fulfilling their duties. The animator is an intermediary and builds cooperation between partners. His or her role is to inspire other people to act according to partnership rules and encourage them to behave in such a way so as to help the partnership work effectively and make progress. In short, the animator is a protector of the partnership rules and vision.

⁴ Paweł Jordan, Bohdan Skrzypczak „Kim jest animator społeczny?”, Warszawa 2003

How to train LEADER animators?

TRAINING OF LEADER ANIMATORS (EXAMPLE OF POLAND 2004-2006)

In 2004-2005, a Polish umbrella organisation of rural non-governmental organisations (Polish Rural Forum) developed a comprehensive training programme for 100 rural leaders (animators). The programme, lasting in total 2 years, included some 15 training days and several study trips in Poland and in other EU Member States. Throughout this period the trainees received real tasks related to the formation of Local Action Groups in their areas and then regularly met for a follow-up training. In some cases there were two animators from the same area, which worked very well. Participants used materials from the EU, but also the UNDP and had an access to a dedicated website.

Topics included:

PART 1 - 3 days

- LEADER+ approach and its characteristics,
- Building partnership,
- Group process, change management,
- Analysing the needs of the participants

PART 2 - 5 days

- Identification of problems of local communities and analytical tools,
- Communication, organising meetings, public speeches and presentations,
- National Development Plan and its measures, sources of funding,
- „Field work” –meetings with people, case study analysis

PART 3 - 4 days

- Strategic planning, project planning
- Management of the partnership
- Preparation of an application for LEADER in the rural development programme

PART 4 - 3 days

- Formal and legal issues connected with partnership
- Financial management, project management,
- Evaluation
- Role of animators and preparation of an action plan for the future

When asked several years after the training, the animators found various workshops and methods of working with group were most useful in their work.

The training was so relevant to building animation skills that Poland is planning a new edition in 2017.



The animator discusses the priorities of the Local Development Strategy with the local community. (photo: courtesy of R. Kaminski)

PRACTICAL ADVICE ON TRAINING OF ANIMATORS

Do's

- Preparation takes time: spend enough time on information, explanation, discussion – start early and allocate sufficient time and money for this.
- Coaching can help animators in the process.
- Central training for animators is useful not only for building competences but also for networking.

Don't

- Let the animators monopolize the process – animators should mostly help the partners get together.

STEP 2. ESTABLISHING LOCAL ACTION GROUPS (LAGS)

In Step 2 you will find out:

What is a Local Action Group and who forms it?

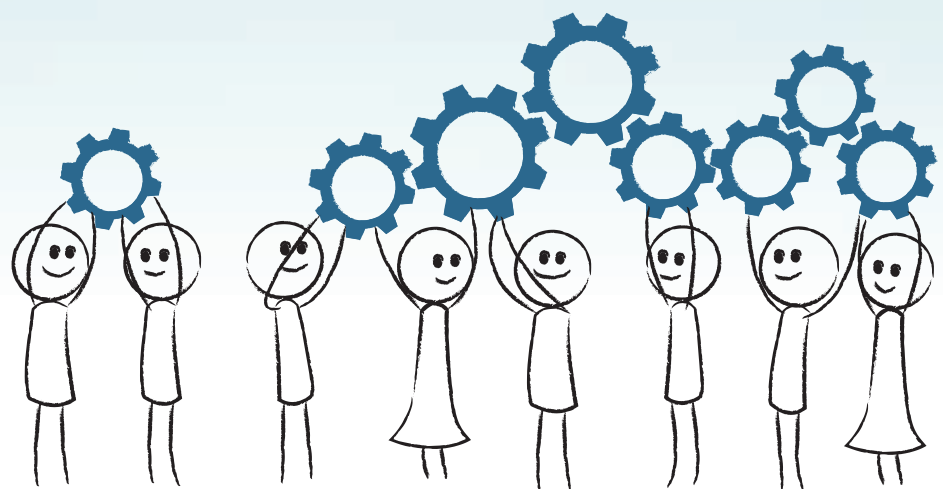
What is the legal form of Local Action Groups?

How is a Local Action Group established?

What administrative capacity do Local Action Groups need to have?

What is the territory covered by Local Action Groups?

How can the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to Rural Development (IPARD) support the creation of Local Action Groups?



No Pain, No Gain!

What is a Local Action Group and who forms it?

In simple terms, a Local Action Group (LAG) is a representative group of public, private and civil society partners, who get together to define and implement the actions to improve their local area.

Based on the contribution of G. Soster's, PREPARE asbl

The Local Action Groups should be representative of the local community with a mix of **three sectors - civil society, public (governmental) institutions and economic partners**. The **civil society sector** gathers non-governmental organisations and associations, such as

those involving young people, the elderly, tourism and cultural associations, sport clubs, environmental protection associations and so on. The most visible and influential representatives of the **public sector** at the local level are municipalities, but also public institutions such as educational bodies, schools, and in certain cases development agencies (depending on their legal status). The **economic sector** includes a wide range of different organisations and individuals, such as private companies, farmers, rural residents, business people and other organisations registered to work for profit.

COMPOSITION OF A LOCAL ACTION GROUP (EXAMPLE OF PRLEKIJIA, SLOVENIA)

Prlekija Local Action Group⁵ in Slovenia is an example of a balanced composition. It is typical of an average EU LAG, covering 38 000 inhabitants in eight municipalities. It is situated in a predominantly rural area, with a share of agriculture above the national average.

Prlekija Local Action Group is legally a contractual partnership. It is made up of 85 partners, of whom 25% from the public sector, 22% from the economic sector and 53% from the civil society sector. The highest body of the LAG is its assembly, where each partner has one vote. The assembly has selected a lead partner PRA (Development Agency of Prlekija) and 15 members of the management board with five representatives of the three sectors. The board selects projects according to criteria defined in the public calls and in line with the goals of the local development strategy. Project evaluation is done by the evaluation committee, consisting of five experts selected from the management board. Largely due to its balanced composition,


the Local Action Group has proven successful. For example it was nominated as one of the three most successful LAGs in Slovenia in the 2007-2013 period.



Demonstration of pottery making for international guests, Local Action Group Prlekija, village of Verzej, Slovenia (photo: courtesy of Goran Soster)

⁵ More about the LAG Prlekija at www.las-prlekija.com

There are rules about the Local Action Groups composition.

	EU Legal Framework: LOCAL ACTION GROUP COMPOSITION AS DEFINED FOR IPARD
<p>Local Action Group (LAG) is an officially registered legal entity (i.e. association, foundation). At the decision-making level, the economic and social partners as well as other representatives of the civil society, such as farmers, rural women, young people and their associations must make up more than 50% of the partnership. Moreover, a minimum of 20% should be</p>	<p>representatives of the local authorities. However, public authorities, or any single interest group, should not have more than 50% of the voting rights. Local Action Group partners represent the various socio-economic sectors based on the territory concerned. Women must participate at a decision-making level.</p>

J. Gierulska from the Polish Managing Authority shares her practical experience:

“The Local Action Group is a very unique organisation. It should embrace many different partners from various sectors, interests and social groups, but at the same time be capable of administrating public money and implementing the Local Development Strategy. These two requirements are sometimes not easy to combine.

The partnership should be broad but also balanced with good participation of women and young people. The broader and more diverse structure of the Local Action Group, the more multi-sectoral and multidimensional the Local Development Strategy is. This is desirable. However, it makes the management more complex.


A wider partnership needs a smaller, core group. The core group consists of engaged people who devote their time and energy to community work (mostly unpaid, on a voluntary basis). They should be members of a decision making body. The problem is that besides honesty and commitment, they need more technical competences to analyse and recommend projects. An appropriate and balanced composition of the decision making body is a key issue. My experience shows that it is more important to find committed people with

some sort of mission as technical competences can be improved later. Local Action Groups can organise trainings, or involve experts supporting decision making body using funding earmarked for animation and capacity improvement”.

The formation of a Local Action Group needs to be transparent and inclusive. To this end, an analysis of stakeholders is useful. Stakeholders are individuals or institutions with legitimate interests, which can, directly or indirectly, in a positive or negative way, affect a given action, or can be affected by it. Stakeholders’ analysis identifies the key parties, their resources, knowledge, experience and potential inputs and an attitude (positive or negative) in the process. On this basis animators support the partners in forming the Local Action Groups.



Training young people in natural resources (Serbia, LAG Casska Baser). (photo: courtesy of Serbian Ministry of Agriculture)

	EU Legal Framework: PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN / YOUNG PEOPLE IN LOCAL ACTION GROUPS UNDER IPARD
<p>The economic and social partners and civil society, such as farmers, rural women, young people and their associations, must make up more than 50% of the partnership at the decision-making level.</p> <p>Women must be present at decision-making level. A minimum number should be established in the programme.</p>	<p>The inclusion of less powerful groups is particularly challenging. After all, these groups are also less organised, less represented and you will need more effort to reach them. They will certainly not be the first groups one comes across. Some practical advice is given below.</p>

INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT (EXAMPLE OF TURKEY)

The Özyeğin Foundation in Turkey, a member of the IPARD Monitoring Committee, involved women as core partners in their projects in the East of the country. Murat Bayramoğlu shares some do's and don'ts for animators from this experience:



*Mobilisation of local women in Bitlis province, Turkey
(photo: courtesy of Özyeğin Foundation)*

DO	DON'T
Organize meetings in places and at times when the people are able to come	Don't start only with those who seem more enthusiastic.
Make sure you have as many members as possible from the disadvantaged groups, also those, who appear less interested in the beginning. The number will decrease along the way	Don't give perfect examples in order to encourage disadvantaged groups. Introducing a top-down model should not be your priority.
Organize events/activities to bring female and male groups together to improve mutual understanding	Don't have men talk about the problems and difficulties which women experience.
Always give more voice to those coming from disadvantaged groups - let them speak out more/have more time/be more visible/be the leading person. Let them sit in front.	Don't rely on communication technologies women cannot access.
Share information directly. It is important as it will give them the motivation to follow up the process.	Don't speak to people with a project jargon. If people don't understand you, failure is guaranteed.
Assist them! Regularly remind them of the achievements. Self-confidence is crucial among disadvantaged communities.	Don't be inaccessible which will make you an outsider and don't be too ordinary which will also end up making you a complete insider. Both roles will weaken your role in the community.
Know their opinion leaders and be in contact with priests/imams and local teachers.	

What is the legal form of Local Action Groups?

The legal form of a Local Action Group depends purely on the national legal context in the country concerned. In most Member States Local Action Groups are mostly registered as associations or foundations. An in-depth legal analysis can show which legal forms are truly suitable for Local Action Groups in the specific national context.

For example, Poland initially allowed three legal forms: an association, foundation or association of associations, with no provisions specific to LEADER. However, the implementation brought several practical problems. It turned out that an association could only group natural (private) persons, so it was difficult to formally establish a link with the member to an organisation he or she represented. Conversely, an association of associations could only contain legal persons as members and active local leaders (private individuals) were effectively excluded. To solve these legal difficulties, Poland introduced a new legal form of “a special association”, which proved very suitable for Local Action Groups.

A similar development occurred in Slovenia. In the programming period 2007-2013, the legal form of Local



Forming a group is a long process (photo: courtesy of LAG Troyan Alpriltsi, Bulgaria)

Action Group was open, and the alternatives included associations or contractual partnerships. In the latter, the Local Action Groups gave a mandate to municipalities or development agencies to legally represent them as a clearly designated lead partner, who offered its legal entity and a separate bank account for the LAG. For the current period, a legal form of contractual partnership is obligatory to all (37) Local Action Groups in Slovenia.

How is a Local Action Group established?

Based on contribution of J. Gierulska, Polish Ministry of Agriculture

Local communities vary in terms of capacities, history of working together and/or conflict, and can have very diverse institutional cultures. Therefore, it is vital to design the partnership to reflect the realities of the local context. Nevertheless, in practice, the process of establishment of a Local Action Group follows one of three paths:

1. an already existing association adjusts to fit the LEADER requirements; or
2. a completely new legal entity is formed; or
3. the Local Action Group is practically based on one “accountable body” for legal and administrative purposes with other partners contributing only to decision making.

All models have advantages and disadvantages. The most important is to choose the most appropriate one for the given territory and local community.

The first model might be the most sustainable one because it is based on a local organisation existing before financial support under LEADER is made available. This organisation will probably have people with demonstrated commitment

and volunteers as a strong asset. However, as the structure might be well-established, there might be difficulties in opening up to other stakeholders so as to achieve a balanced partnership.

The second path is to start from scratch and form a new entity composed in line with the LEADER requirements. Thus, already at the outset, the entity is broadly representative of the local stakeholders, open, transparent and accountable, both to local people and to its founders. However, it also needs to be capable of managing public funds. For this task, people often need additional training. The new entity can, however, include an experienced partner, which is somewhat a mix between the second and the third model.

The third model is to rely on the administrative capacity of one experienced partner, when people feel there is no need or desire to create an additional structure. In this case, the experienced partner can become “an accountable body” for legal and administrative purposes, while the other partners

form some sort of decision making body or a selection committee for projects. There are certainly advantages of having an experienced partner, and its existing resources in that there probably will be little need for extra capacity

building. However, it may be difficult to avoid that the accountable body takes a strongly dominant position in the partnership with little room for real participation and the involvement of others.

FORMATION OF A LOCAL ACTION GROUP (EXAMPLE OF LAG "TROYAN-APRILTSI", BULGARIA)

The Local Action Group "Trojan-Apriltsi" was established in 2007 as a non-governmental organisation (NGO). The initiative came from the local community but it was actively supported by the municipal authorities of Trojan and Apriltsi. Many meetings were organised where local businessmen, NGOs, cultural organisations and citizens tried to build local capacity for implementing the LEADER approach.

In 2009, this NGO was approved for implementing a project for establishing a potential Local Action Group and drafting a Local Development Strategy (LDS) on the territory of the two municipalities. A number of meetings with different target groups were organised, during which a SWOT analysis⁶ and a Local Development Strategy were prepared.

The strategy was successfully implemented in the period 2011-2014, and over 40 projects in various economic and social fields have been financed with a total public contribution of around 1.4 million EUR.



Rodopa Trojan", beneficiary of LAG Trojan-Apriltsi (photo: courtesy of LAG "Trojan-Apriltsi")

⁶ SWOT analysis (alternatively SWOT matrix) is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and is a structured planning method that evaluates those four elements of an organization, project or business venture

PRACTICAL ADVICE ON COMPOSITION OF LOCAL ACTION GROUPS

Do's


- Keep a fair balance of power between Local Action Group members – ensure this via its legal form
- Empower existing civil society organisations
- Keep things open, transparent and publicise to the whole community
- The personality of the local leader is important

Don't

- Build partnerships only for distributing EU money
- Allow one member (such as a municipality) take the lead at the expense of others
- Allow a small group to hijack the LAG

What administrative capacity do Local Action Groups need to have?

Regardless of what way the LAG has been established, the presence of an administrative capacity to manage public funds is essential for participating in LEADER.

 **EU Legal Framework: LOCAL ACTION GROUP ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY UNDER IPARD**

Managing Authority must ensure that the Local Action Groups either select an administrative and financial lead actor able to administer public funds, and ensure the satisfactory operation of the partnership, or come together in a legally constituted common structure, the constitution of which guarantees the satisfactory operation of the partnership and the **ability to administer public funds**.

In practice the competences include the following:

- project management;
- financial management and accounting for non-profit organisations;
- management of investment projects (including construction activities);



Using broadband for learning in remote regions in Sweden (photo: Samuel Pettersson, European Union, 2015)

- public procurement;
- tax administration for NGOs;
- employment law;
- basic IT tools, writing skills, communication.


Capacity building activities should also cover these areas.

What is the territory covered by Local Action Groups?

Territory can be defined on the basis of an institutional or relational dimension. In the institutional dimension the boundaries of a given area are defined by a legal entity. In its relational dimension the territory reflects a given community and its collective actions. The LEADER approach challenges the local community to link together the institutional and relational aspects in order to define the most relevant area for implementing public action. The setting up of a Local Action Group requires a common territory that is sufficiently meaningful for the various stakeholder groups to decide to engage in a collective public action to develop the territory.



Defining the boundaries of LAG territory is a complex process (photo: courtesy of Mile Gosnjic)

 **EU Legal Framework: LOCAL ACTION GROUP TERRITORY AS DEFINED FOR IPARD**

- Local Action Groups cover rural areas.
- The territory covered by a Local Action Group has between 10 000 and 150 000 inhabitants.
- The territory has sufficient critical mass of human, financial, economic resources for a viable strategy.
- The territory is coherent in terms of social, economic or geographical features.
- The same location must not belong to more than one LAG, therefore: one partnership, one strategy, one territory.
- Towns of more than 25 000 inhabitants are excluded.

The rules under IPARD (EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to Rural Development) for defining the territory of a Local Action Group are based on the approach taken from the rural development programmes in the Member States.

The LAG territory does not have to necessarily respond to predefined administrative boundaries. It can also be

established around common historical features (e.g. folklore traditions), natural landscapes (mountains, rivers), ethnic diversity, etc. What is important is that the new territorial identity is built on factors, stronger than the simple common belonging to an administrative division and which local partnerships can promote.

DEFINING THE LAG TERRITORY (EXAMPLE OF BULGARIA)

Local Action Groups in Bulgaria were established at the lowest national administrative level – municipalities on the basis of homogeneous and coherent territory with common borders, i.e. neighbouring municipalities. Territorial homogeneity, coherence, the presence of common natural resources such as mountains, lakes, rivers, etc. are important to be respected but not always two neighboring municipalities can establish a vital partnership. The main principles underpinning the

establishment of Local Action Groups in Bulgaria were not just a combination of two or more municipalities but mostly common understanding and ideas for the development of a certain territory. The shared traditions, culture, and lifestyle of the people living in the territory also play a key role in the establishment of the Local Action Groups. The most successful groups proved to be those which managed to best combine the territorial and human potential.

PRACTICAL ADVICE ON DESIGNATION OF TERRITORY

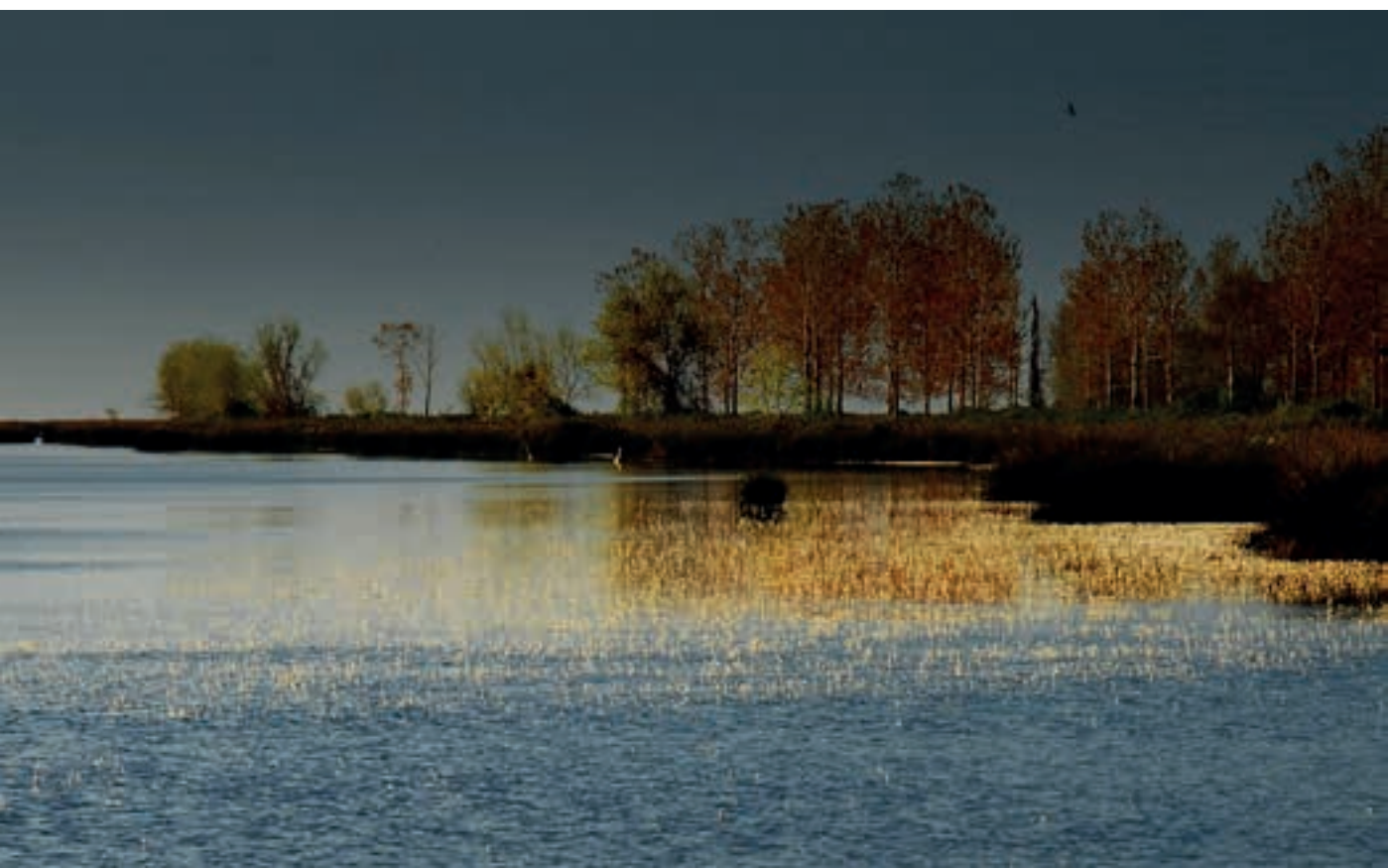
Do's

- Establish a LAG around a real shared interest

Don't

- Simply duplicate an existing administrative structure or an area

Geographical features can underline the designation of LEADER territory (Kozilirmat Delta, Turkey). (photo: courtesy of the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Livestock)



How can the EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to Rural Development (IPARD) support the creation of Local Action Groups?

The Technical Assistance measure of IPARD can be used for preparations for LEADER in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

The sole beneficiary of Technical Assistance is the Managing Authority (MA). This means that at this preparatory stage the Managing Authority has a leading role in advancing the LEADER process in the country by planning related activities, defining specific projects, tendering, and contracting. The Managing Authority needs to plan carefully the steps needed in creating an inclusive balanced Local Action Group, in accordance with EU rules as well as to tender and

contract the activities related to dissemination of information, animation and drafting of local development strategies.

One key challenge in using Technical Assistance funds to finance preparatory activities for LEADER is the cash flow behind the project execution. IPARD payments are done after the completion of the project, or else after each stage. Normally, the service providers ensure the cash flow, which can be demanding, especially for bigger and more complex projects. Alternatively, national pre-financing can be provided.

USE OF IPARD TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR LEADER CAPACITY BUILDING SUPPORTING THE FORMATION OF POTENTIAL LOCAL ACTION GROUPS (EXAMPLE OF TURKEY)

A group of 14 local development guides (animators) previously well trained and coordinated by a project leader were given a task to identify and encourage the formation of a pilot group of 23 Local Action Groups in 10 regions of Turkey.

The project started from a selection of local areas with already high potential in terms of social capital in the area (willingness of local and district authorities, presence and willingness of cooperate of agricultural chambers, NGOs with the theme of women, sport, youth, environment, tourism), and local cultural and natural resources. The total population and population density were also taken into account.

The broad methodology of the process was defined by the Managing Authority in the project Terms of Reference. There was one launch meeting in Ankara, and a general meeting in each region. Subsequently work moved to the local areas selected on the basis of interest and potential. In each area, the animators conducted at least 16 general information meetings or focus groups. Each selected area formed a legal association and drafted a list of broad priorities.

Project duration: August-December 2016

Project budget: 295 000 EUR

Project outputs: 23 potential Local Action Groups formed

Mr Orhan Polat, a local development guide working in Amasya province, shares some direct experience from the project on forming the Local Action Groups:

Q: What did the formation of potential Local Action Groups look like in practice?

A: For me, establishing Local Action Groups was not simply establishing an association. It is because every district has different reasons for backwardness. It is important to find out why. When the local people themselves learn this, the district can crack its shell and begin to progress. Unless the solution is created, the potential of the district shall continue to remain in the shell and maybe stay there forever. In my opinion, the election of a management board and participation of opinion leaders are critical.

Not surprisingly, there will be conflicts while forming the management structure, so you need to provide guidance to the newly establishing Local Action Groups. The process needs to be fair taking into account: participation in the stakeholder information meetings, on a voluntary basis, time, vision, and the balanced representation of stakeholders, not allowing for the hegemony of a specific interest group. If the local people are convinced that the management is established in accordance with these principles, they would support it. They will defend

it against those individuals who attempt to sabotage the process. These are the ones who generally try to protect the current status (status quo) in the district. It is important to announce the newly established structure to the public in "local media". Besides, the use of social media is paramount for the participatory approach.

The attendance of the "key persons" ("opinion leaders") besides the formal hierarchy is crucial. In order to identify them you need to stay overnight in the villages. If you don't, you will only see the formal structures, which can mean a top-down approach. The reasons for the backwardness of the area shall remain unspoken - under the iceberg. Also, be sure to use objective evaluation for ideas coming from people.

Q: You were coming from outside the Local Action Group areas. Did it help or hinder the process?

A: If you are external, you can see the potential better. If you are local, you know the area and the people better but people can resist change. It can be hard to stay neutral and have an objective viewpoint in small towns and/or districts due to nepotism. So a combination of an external development guide (animator) who knows the Leader approach and techniques working closely with local leaders can be effective.

Gudul-Camlidere Local Action Group

Güdül-Çamlidere Local Action Group in Ankara region was amongst the LAGs formed in the project.

Güdül is a small mountain town 90 km from Ankara on the ancient Silk Route and features an attractive historical centre, exceptional landscapes, biodiversity and nearby prehistoric caves. However, the area is hardly

known by the nearby Ankara population and there are no tourism facilities.

Ms Havva Yıldırım, mayor of Güdül shares her views about the new Local Action Group:

Q: What do you find most valuable in the LEADER approach?

A: In my opinion; LEADER is not only an IPARD measure but also and, more importantly a long term guide, vision, and an investment to lead and inspire entrepreneurship in our rural area

Q: what are your major concerns about the further development of your Local Action Group? What do you need most at this stage?

A: The most important issue is to build a relationship of trust among different stakeholders. Human resource management and hands-on trainings are other crucial components of a sustainable and sound implementation. If those are managed properly, we will thrive!



Photo: some members of the newly formed Local Action Group in Gudul, Ankara province (2017) (photo: courtesy of Turkish Ministry of Agriculture)

RECOMMENDATION: WATCH OUT AND BE DEMANDING!

In its Special Report Nr 5, "Implementation of the Leader approach for rural development" (Luxembourg, 2010), the European Court of Auditors examined if the application of LEADER approach has been implemented in ways that add value while minimising the risks to sound financial management.

The Court has pointed out that even though there are many examples of good practices, the Member States and the Commission were often "undemanding" as regards Local Action Groups. The following problems were identified:

- weak "bottom-up" energy and little enthusiasm of Local Action Groups, who become de facto another layer of administration;
- high operational costs whilst no political legitimacy of the Local Action Groups;
- decision making dominated by local authorities;
- only some LAGs having truly innovative and multi-sectoral strategies and projects;
- little emphasis on the quality and efficiency of projects implemented via Local Action Groups;
- rules on conflict of interest not respected leading to problems with financial management.

PRACTICAL ADVICE TO INSTITUTIONS AND PARTNERS

Do's

- Keep the spirit of LEADER alive: enthusiasm, constructive approach and commitment of people is the core.
- Building trust takes time – be patient. Once you lose it, it is lost!

Don't

- Leave the responsibilities of institutions and partners unclear.
- Create unnecessary administrative burden – the necessary requirements can be hard enough.



Traditional local products are not only an economic but cultural asset (photo: courtesy of Susana Djordjevic Milosevic)

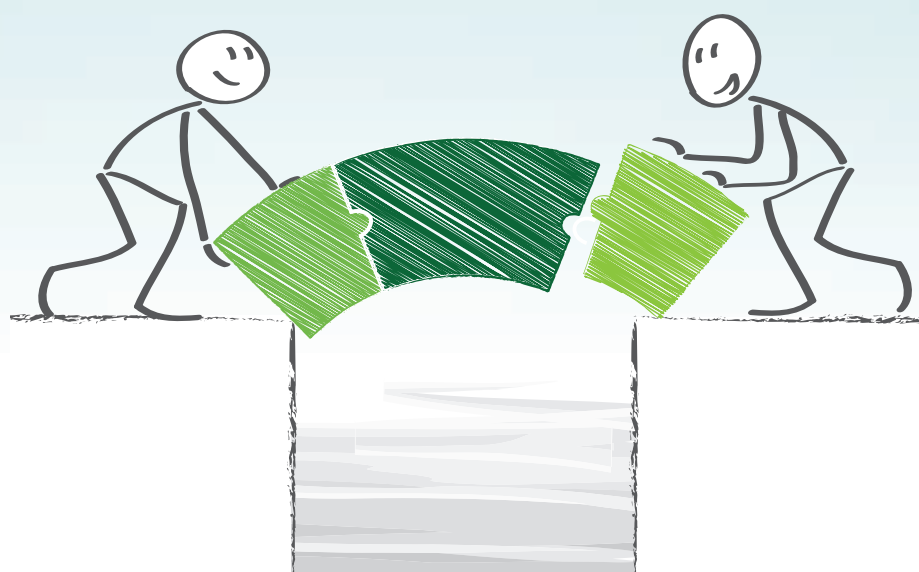
STEP 3 PREPARING LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

In Step 3 you will find out:

How to prepare a Local Development Strategy?

How to recognise and select a good Local Development Strategy?


*How did Member States use the Rural Development Programmes
to establish LEADER?*



It's not a Dream, it's a Plan!

How to Prepare a Local Development Strategy (LDS)?

In order to apply for support, each Local Action Group needs to prepare its Local Development Strategy (LDS).

 EU Legal Framework: CONTENT OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY UNDER THE INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT (IPARD)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The definition of the area and population covered by the strategy; • An analysis of the development needs and potential of the area, including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; • A description of the strategy and its objectives. The strategy shall be coherent with the IPARD programme; • A description of the process of community involvement in the development of the strategy; as well as the Local Action Group's partnership and internal decision making rules; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of actions demonstrating how objectives are translated into expected activities and type of projects supported; • The financial plan of the strategy, including expenditure on acquisition of skills and animation, running costs and small projects; • A description of the procedure related to the recommendation of the local projects that will be given extra score in IPARD ranking.

First steps: stakeholder analysis

Strategy development is a social process. A good strategy cannot be developed without the involvement of all current local influential actors, as well as those who may affect the development of the area in the future.

The creation of a collective body (such as a Working Group) to manage the process of strategy development is a chance to involve a variety of groups and interests in the work.

Activities leading to the formation of the Local Action Group and later to the elaboration of a Local Development

Strategy should start with the stakeholder analysis. Stakeholders are individuals or institutions which can, directly or indirectly, in a positive or negative way, affect a project or programme, or can be affected by it. Stakeholders are to be found in different groups depending on their links with the area, i.e. key stakeholders, secondary stakeholders and other stakeholders. The analysis (to be done for each of these groups) can be summed up in the table.

In the process of organising work on the strategy, it might be difficult to allocate precisely all the entities into the appropriate stakeholder group, so the above analysis should be treated as an ongoing task to be carried out

„STAKEHOLDERS“ Institutions, organisations and other bodies	MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS	INTERESTS AND EXPECTATIONS	STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES	IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS FOR THE WORKING GROUP	MONITORING
1. Key stakeholders	Describe the role in the development and implementation of the strategy	Here should be mentioned: • what is the potential interest of the organisation in creating the strategy, • what are its expectations towards the strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the resources • knowledge and experience • potential input into the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contribution is positive towards the strategy • potential contribution is negative towards the strategy 	What is the actual role of the organisation in strategy development (this column can be filled during the process of strategy development or after a certain stage has been completed)
2. Secondary stakeholders					
3. Other stakeholders					

throughout the process of formation of the Local Action Group and strategy development.

Diagnosis of the initial situation and core trends in the territory

Spatial, geographical and natural conditions

One of the most important aspects of partnerships created within LEADER is their link with the area (territory). In the case of a Local Action Group this area is not always identical to the administrative boundaries. Hence it is necessary to define the territorial coverage of the Local Action Group and to demonstrate its special geographical, natural and other features which define its unique nature. In the beginning, the area has to be described with area in square km, administrative units in the area, its geographical location and landscape. The starting point should be a map indicating the location of the area and its main features. The natural and environmental features should be described (e.g. flat or mountainous), climate, type of soils, natural resources, forests, water resources, environmental pollution, etc. If the area is in part or whole considered to be of high nature value, contains landscape parks, natural reserves or areas in the Natura 2000 network, it should be mentioned in the description. The description should also include some information about the neighbouring areas.

Historical and cultural conditions

Most of the Local Action Groups refer to a common history and cultural heritage, which can include valuable objects of material or spiritual culture. In this part, the description should contain important historical events in the area, as well as traditions, folklore, and in particular local products traditionally made in the area. This refers to both crafts using traditional raw materials, production methods, as well as the so-called culinary heritage.

Local community

This should be a description of the demographic characteristics of the people living in the area, including:

- number of inhabitants, including rural areas,
- structure of the population by age and gender,
- employment situation,
- level of education,
- groups of citizens in the most difficult situation.

Other information in this section should concern social infrastructure and the quality of life, such as access to education, the economic situation of families, security, health and social care, as well as the specificity of the local labour market. Access to culture, especially in remote rural areas should be mentioned. The social capital should also be described, e.g. by including information about the



Valorizing local crafts... Iskilip wood carving, Turkey. (photo: courtesy of Turkish Ministry of Agriculture)



Creating facilities for children to increase rural well-being (Denmark). (photo: Kirstine Mengel, European Union, 2015)

number of non-governmental organisations and other associations and their typical activities. An important indicator of the social capital is also the civic activity as shown for instance in the electoral turnout.

Economy

This section should contain a short description of the area's economy, including the number of businesses and farms, the sectors in which they operate and key companies in the area. As far as possible, information should be provided about the "climate for entrepreneurship", for instance, any action by the local government to facilitate economic activity and the functioning of the business environment. Taking into account the important role of agriculture in some rural areas, basic information should be given about the trends in the sector, in particular the area of arable land, less favoured areas, number of farms and the main

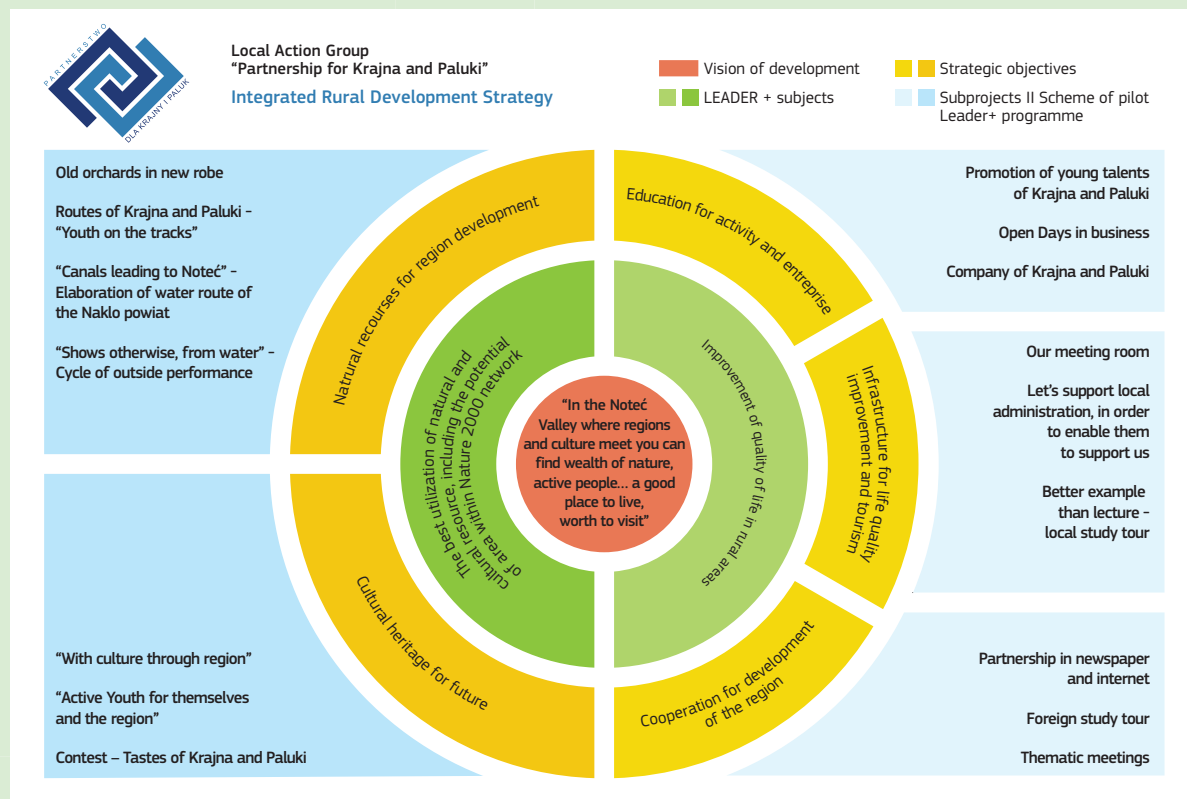
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (EXAMPLE OF KRAJNA-PALUKI LOCAL ACTION GROUP, POLAND)

Based on contribution of Ryszard Kaminski: Polish Rural Forum, Polish Academy of Sciences

A good local development strategy needs to be selective, clear, and reflect the ambitions of a wide section of the rural population. People need to find in it their own words and ideas, which are often "out of the box" and expressed in a way which can be removed from the standard concepts designed in capitals or by consultancy companies. But local people who "know it all very well" need also be open to change, and different, sometimes unknown options, outside of their usual "comfort zone".

The concept of linking the development to the river and its Natura 2000 site came from the local leaders themselves and not from an external consultant. Yet, in the beginning, it was hard to convince local people that the Natura 2000 area on the Notec River could be used as an important economic and social asset. Participation of local government and the Inland Navigation School in Naklo helped make this dream come true. Now, 11 years later, the area has several tourist trails, an ecomuseum and a major river marina.

Krajna-Paluki region lies on the Notec river in Poland. It



used to be one of those 'areas with no particular characteristics'. This is how the local people gradually made it thrive with the focus around the Notec river. In 2006 the strategy was defined as follows:



Canoeing on Notec river near Paluki
 (photo: courtesy of Ryszard Kaminski)

production sectors. The service sector should also be analysed.

Other information important for strategy implementation

This section contains information specific to a given area and important from the point of view of the strategic objectives and priority themes (if any). If the main focus should be e.g. on tourism, this section should show to what extent the area can attract tourists (e.g. the number and size of lakes or other water reservoirs; tourist infrastructure; number of tourists visiting the area per year). If the key issue is to improve access to information, this section should contain data about the number of libraries, access to internet, etc.

Showing that the area has some common features

The analysis should also prove that the area has common features with respect to its history, culture, economy or natural conditions. The analysis should focus primarily on those features. The area should have a common identity and certain links between villages and communities, which are recognised and felt by its inhabitants. Sometimes such links are created around “new themes”, which have only recently become part of the local cultural and social life (e.g. the organisation of a cyclical event, new tourist attractions). One of the tasks of the local partnership and its strategy will be to create and strengthen this feeling of common identity.

Analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT analysis) as a method to define directions for development – between vision and strategic objectives

SWOT analysis is a technique that involves evaluation of the potential for development in the context of own characteristics.

In the process of strategy development, SWOT analysis can be carried out in the Working Group, after having completed the area diagnosis and having defined the vision – the desired situation of the area. The SWOT method is then used to analyse our own strategic position on our way to achieve the vision.

In summing up the analysis, we should ask the following questions:

- which strengths make it possible for us to use this opportunity?
- which weaknesses make it impossible to use this opportunity?
- which strengths can reduce the consequences of this threat?
- which weaknesses can increase the negative consequences of this threat?



Valorising local products - participation of Serbian LAG „321 Coka“ at the agricultural fair in Hodmezovasarhely (Hungary). (photo: courtesy of Serbian Ministry of Agriculture)

Strategy formulation: measures and indicators of achievement

Most strategies are built according to the following scheme:



	Positive	Negative
Related to us (i.e. we can influence them)	S	W
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • our internal situation • this is where we are in relation to others 	Strengths	Weaknesses
Related to our external environment (i.e. we can't change it)	O	T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • external situation • this is what can happen to us 	Opportunities	Threats

Mission/Vision of the partnership

The mission is usually linked to the functioning of an organisation and therefore it defines the **declared way of operation** of a Local Action Group in order to achieve the desired situation (strategic goals and objectives). **The mission statement should contain fundamental principles, which express the philosophy of our partnership.**

The goals and objectives of a strategy define what we want to achieve, what kind of situation we would like to have in the future, while the mission defines how we would like to achieve them, i.e. it responds to the question why we are doing it, what is the meaning of our activities.

The vision responds to the following questions:

- what would our situation be in a few years' time?
- how would our community function?

Selection of priority themes

The selection of the priority themes is one of the key stages of strategy development. The theme or themes should be related to the local resources and opportunities which it can create for the development of the area. This would suggest that the choice of theme should be done after the diagnosis and analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. On the other hand if this analysis is done after choosing the theme(s), then the analysis can already focus on the selected theme. It would not, however, be appropriate to start work on the strategy from the selection of priority theme, without even a preliminary analysis of the local conditions and the external opportunities and threats.

Another important issue is the number of themes which would be included in the strategy. The local partnership should think carefully whether – instead of selecting several themes – it would not be better to focus only on one. One should take into account the fact that the financial resources may not be sufficient to deal with more than one theme or that a newly created partnership might not have sufficient experience and expertise to work and seek consensus in a large group of partners. In such a situation, focusing on a single theme might sometimes give the partnership more chance of success – implementation of good projects and sustainability over a longer period.

Strategic goals and objectives

Definition of goals and objectives is the next stage of strategy building. Goals and objectives should be formulated concisely and specify what we want to achieve.

In strategy building, it is important to define what we would like to achieve in the longer-term perspective, and then how we intend to achieve this, going from the more general to the more specific. Therefore the goal-setting can be divided into two stages:

- a. defining the strategic objectives (goals),
- b. defining the specific (operational) objectives.

Well set objectives should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound).

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring is a process of permanent control as to whether implementation of the strategy proceeds as expected, whether – and with what speed – it is bringing us closer to

Farmers and their families are important stakeholders in LAGs in Ireland (photo: European Union, 2013)



our goals and objectives, how quickly are we spending the funds allocated to the different components (tasks, projects). So it is both about the process and the outcomes.

From this point of view, monitoring is an important element of the day-to-day management of an organisation or project. It provides information which enables the manager to find out, in a systematic way, about problems and about variations from the planned course of events. Monitoring must be done based on a set of measurable indicators (SMART), and must feed back to improvements in project management or implementation procedures.

Finally, evaluation is used to measure the success of the project. In the process of evaluation, the responsibilities, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the project is analysed in relation to the initial assumptions.



Croatia – summer festival of LAGs. Products from Vuka-Dunav LAG. (photo: courtesy of LAG Laura)

SOME GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR BUILDING LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Resource analysis session

- ✦ What is special in our area?
- ✦ What function is the area playing?
- ✦ Who are the members of our society?
- ✦ What are people doing for a living?
- ✦ How is the area organised?
- ✦ What does our area offer to children and the younger generation?
- ✦ How are we solving our problems?
- ✦ What kind of habits have we cultivated?
- ✦ What does our area look like?
- ✦ What about the environment and surroundings?
- ✦ What is the condition of agriculture?
- ✦ What is the condition of our infrastructure?
- ✦ Others...

Building a vision, priorities, projects list

- ✦ My area in 10 years...
- ✦ I will be happy if...
- ✦ I dream of ...
- ✦ What should we change first?
- ✦ What happens if we do nothing?
- ✦ Setting priorities
- ✦ Long-term planning
- ✦ Short-term activities

Selection of projects (activity)

- ✦ What will integrate us the most?
- ✦ What is the most important for us?
- ✦ What we want to change first?
- ✦ What will change our life the most?
- ✦ What will be easy to achieve?
- ✦ What can we afford to do?



Keeping traditions alive – Ethno Day of Young Farmers – former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

How to recognise and select a good Local Development Strategy?

Based on contribution of Joanna Gierulska, Polish Ministry of Agriculture

A local development strategy is far more than just a document. It should be seen first and foremost as a result of participative work of local communities. It will sometimes be drafted by non-experts so it may be technically imperfect.

Below are a few practical hints for the Managing Authorities:

- Issue clear supporting documents on time such as guidelines and Question&Answer guidance, preferably elaborated with support of Local Action Groups or local animators;
- Be clear about the role of external experts in drafting the strategy;
- Give sufficient time for preparation – at least 6 months only for drafting the Local Development Strategy;
- Plan financial support for the preparatory stage;
- Carefully plan the selection procedure, agree the time schedule with all stakeholders;
- Be ready with legal provisions, Local Action Groups should have stable legal environment to draft their strategies;
- Decide on the role of external experts and administration in a Selection Committee – best used in combination;
- Provide Local Action Groups with an opportunity to correct their strategies. The Selection Committee should give its score and justification on each criterion. This should be communicated clearly to the Local Action Groups. Before implementation, Local Action Groups should score above the minimum for each criterion so to allow corrections;

- Do not focus on procedures and Local Development Strategy as a document. Try to see the bottom-up approach and quality of partnership. Provide Local Action Groups with a standard set of procedures instead;
- Get Local Action Groups to compete for quality benchmarks and not against each other because the Local Action Groups may be unwilling to share experience at this stage: peer to peer pressure is key to achieve quality.

The following elements are present in good strategies:

- Balanced partnership (influence of municipality, appropriate legal form assuring equal rights for all members)
- Commitment of Local Action Groups members
- Bottom-up consultation process
- In-depth diagnosis and analyses of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT analysis)
- Clear goals linked to diagnosis and analyses of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT analysis)
- Clear criteria for recommending projects which are valuable for the area, give local prioritisation comparing to national or regional criteria, are linked to the analysis and evidenced by chosen priorities.

Procedures are important to avoid irregularities and assure sufficient transparency but they are not a crucial element of Local Development Strategy!



Imperial Basket Fairs - village olympics in Serbia (LAG Caske Bara) (photo: courtesy of Serbian Ministry of Agriculture)

SUPPORTING THE SETTING UP OF LEADER FROM A RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (EXAMPLE OF POLAND)

Based on contribution of Joanna Gierulska, Polish Managing Authority

Poland joined the EU in 2004. The short Rural Development Programme of 2004-2006 (RDP) included a special measure to build LEADER. At that time, as a starting point, Poland had a low level of social capital characterised by limited cooperation, little community spirit, lack of trust both within the communities and towards authorities and a top-down decision-making based on authority.

No central information campaign had preceded the start of the measure, but the Polish Rural Forum (made up of non-governmental organisations) had done extensive training of local animators⁷. Lack of preparatory actions on the ground meant that there were not enough mature local leaders or networks ready to create Local Action Groups. The Rural Development Programme included measures to form Local Action Groups, draft a local development strategy and to implement the strategy.

Eligible actions for capacity building scheme:

- establishing of a partnership
- preparation of a Local Development Strategy
- mobilisation of local communities

Beneficiaries: municipalities, non-governmental organisations

Results: 189 Local development strategies prepared

Budget: 30 000 EUR per beneficiary

Duration: 8 – 10 months

⁷ see box on page 18



Training on LEADER in Poland (photo: courtesy of the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development).

The success of the measure was clear in that it supported many Local Action Groups and local development strategies. However, it focused technically on drafting the Local Development Strategy and legal aspects of Local Action Groups rather than on building competences to mobilise local development. There was insufficient emphasis on deep common understanding of the LEADER concept.

!!! The initial gap in capacity building is very difficult to catch up at the later stage.

Even now, more than 10 years after Poland had selected the first Local Action Groups, the difference between the initial Local Action Groups, which had sufficient time to establish their strategies and were supported by well-trained animators, and those which just quickly drafted their strategies not underpinned by a true local bottom-up process is still visible.

PRACTICAL ADVICE ON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Do's

- Pay attention to the quality of the process behind the strategy, not just to the text;
- Local Action Groups should produce the Local Development Strategies by themselves
- Allow sufficient time for consultations, discussion and learning – minimum 1 year

Don't

- Just commission an external consultant to do the job
- Cover all problems and all actions
- Leave the responsibilities of institutions and partners unclear



Rural Turkey – Gudul, Ankara region (photo: courtesy of Turkish Ministry of Agriculture)

STEP 4 IMPLEMENTING LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

In this Step you will find out:

What are the pre-requisites to start an IPARD LEADER measure?

How can Local Action Groups apply for support?

*What support can the Local Action Groups receive to implement their
Local Development Strategies under IPARD?*

Has IPARD already supported any Local Action Groups?



Showtime!

What are the pre-requisites to start a LEADER measure under the EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to Rural Development (IPARD)?

Once preparatory works are completed, countries could start with the measure “Implementation of local development strategies – LEADER approach” for supporting the already selected Local Action Groups.

CHECKLIST FOR IPARD MANAGING AUTHORITIES

Is your country ready for the measure “Implementation of local development strategies – LEADER approach”?

- ✓ There is a sufficient number of mature Local Action Groups (legally registered, with administrative capacity)
- ✓ A sufficient number of Local Action Groups have good quality Local Development Strategies
- ✓ IPARD measure description is finalised by the Managing Authority and approved by the Commission in the IPARD programme
- ✓ Managing Authority has developed a set of detailed criteria for the selection of Local Action Groups and assessment of Local Development Strategies
- ✓ Managing Authority and IPARD Agency have developed adequate procedures (accreditation package) and these were submitted to the Commission
- ✓ Commission have granted entrustment for LEADER measure
- ✓ Managing Authority determines a maximum annual ceiling per LAG to support acquisition of skills/ animation, running costs and small projects
- ✓ Managing Authority has organised a competition for Local Action Groups (which included the assessment of Local Development Strategies)



How can Local Action Group apply to get support under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to Rural Development (IPARD)

Once the preparations are concluded, the IPARD Agency and Managing Authority launch a call for proposals for Local Action Groups as part of an IPARD call. Local Action Groups which have developed local development strategies apply to the IPARD Agency. An evaluation committee, composed of independent experts from different private and public organisations, such as NGOs, local administration, regional development agencies, social bodies, academic institutions, assesses the strategies in line with a set of criteria. Local Action Groups are ranked in line with the assessment criteria included in the IPARD programme of each country. Contracts for support are signed between the IPARD Agency and the selected Local Action Groups. The contract specifies the rights and obligations of the Local Action Groups. As stipulated in the contract, upon completion of a certain activity, Local Action Groups prepare a payment claim, which is then processed by the IPARD Agency. IPARD Agency also performs relevant administrative and, if necessary, on-the-spot checks. On this basis a payment to the Local Action Groups is authorised and funds are transferred to their bank account.



The procedure is summarised here:

1. As stipulated in the call for applications, Local Action Groups apply for support to IPARD Agency. A local development strategy is attached to the application form.



2. The application of a Local Action Group is assessed by the IPARD Agency for compliance with eligibility criteria.



3. Evaluation committee organised by the Managing Authority assesses the Local Action Group and the quality of the Local Development Strategies in line with the criteria and ranks them.



4. Selected Local Action Groups sign the contract with the IPARD Agency, contract defines the rights and commitments of a Local Action Group in accordance with the established rules.



5. Local Action Group submits to the IPARD Agency a payment request for reimbursement of capacity building costs, running costs and small projects in line with the contract.



6. IPARD Agency controls the Local Action Group with respect to the contract commitments (administrative and on-the-spot verification).



7. IPARD Agency executes the payments to Local Action Groups based on controlled and approved payment claims. This is done regularly throughout the period of implementation.

What support can Local Action Groups get to implement their Local Development Strategy under the Instrument For Pre-Accession Assistance To Rural Development (IPARD)?

The selected Local Action Groups can obtain support for:

- building of skills and animation,
- running costs of Local Action Groups and implementation of “small projects”,
- cooperation projects.

IPARD support is more limited compared with the rural development programmes in the Member States, in that the Local Action Groups have the budget only for LAGs’ activities and not to allocate to projects of other beneficiaries. The role of Local Action Groups in this respect is limited to a recommendation of IPARD projects for their compliance with the local development strategy. Projects which obtain such a recommendation obtain extra points in ranking for selection under the measures by IPARD Agency.

Detailed conditions are explained in each IPARD programme and in the national procedures. However, the following activities can obtain support:

Acquisition of skills, animating the inhabitants of Local Action Group territories

The purpose is to support capacity building of Local Action Groups, their members and the rural community to enable them to cooperate, make decisions and implement community- based initiatives.

Training, capacity building actions and communication activities undertaken by the Local Action Groups must be defined in the Local Development Strategy in order to be eligible. Once the Strategy is approved the Local Action Groups should present a detailed proposal for financing the actions and procure services or goods related to these actions.

The animation activities should be defined separately and organised regularly. They could include advice on forming non-governmental organisations to generate involvement of the local community and, therefore leading to improvement of ‘social capital’, advice on project preparation under IPARD, information etc. Animation is important to demonstrate the added value of Local Action Groups. They should not be regarded as yet another bureaucratic structure distributing funding. The Managing Authority may ask Local Action Groups to present an indicative plan of animation activities, including some indicators for assessing their impact.



EU Legal Framework: IPARD SUPPORT TO BUILDING OF SKILLS AND ANIMATION EXAMPLES OF ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES:

- Preparation of the studies of the area (e.g. socio-economic, regional, marketing);
- Training and education of the Local Action Group staff and members (e.g. preparation of business plans, preparation of project applications, accounting.);
- Animation, organisation of events for Local Action Group members and area inhabitants (e.g. promotion of local products and services, seminars, trainings, workshops, meetings);
- Organisation of publicity, promotional materials for LAG's activities and events;
- Participation of the Local Action Group members in seminars, workshops, meetings, study visits, including events of the national and the European Rural Development Network.

ANIMATION ACTIVITIES BY LOCAL ACTION GROUPS (EXAMPLE OF CROATIA)



Croatia: LAG summer festival organised by LAG Laura Biograd na Moru (photo: courtesy of Croatian Ministry of Agriculture)

Each contracted Local Action Group in Croatia received about 60.000 euros for annual activities. These funds provided by IPARD were mainly focused on two sub-measures:

1. Acquisition of skills and animation of Local Action Group inhabitants and
2. Implementation of Local Development Strategies

While the second sub-measure supported mainly running costs activities such as salaries, rent of offices, overheads and purchase of equipment (including IT), the role of the first sub-measure was crucial in bringing local people together.

In the first years, out of the whole budget attributed to LEADER, on average 17% was spent on animation and organisation of promotional events for the population of the LAGs, and another 17% was paid for LAGs members' participation in seminars, workshops, meetings and study trips.

Animation, especially in an early stage of implementation is important for the Local Action Groups' visibility but also to build trust among local people.

A LAG Summer Festival organised already three times by Local Action Group "Laura" from Biograd na Moru is an excellent example of animation.

The LAG's manager Ivan Ćupić says: "The Festival was the biggest gathering of Local Action Groups in this part of Europe with more than 70 LAGs from 12 countries and with more than 500 exhibitors through a three day program. Participants presented their traditional local products to 15 000 visitors, which was a great way of promoting. The Festival was followed by concerts of pop and traditional music. Several workshops were held where LAG managers from Croatia and EU exchanged experiences about implementing the LEADER approach."

Local Action Group "Laura" was founded in 2009 as one of first three LAGs in Croatia. The LAG manager underlines: "Before IPARD funds arrived, the Group was implementing projects from various EU Programmes such as IPA IV, Comenius, Intelligent Energy Europe, Europe for Citizens, Youth in Action, Erasmus+ and European Social Fund. It is crucial to be active and search for different funds still before IPARD budget is available".

“Running costs and small projects”

Running costs are available for Local Action Groups for implementing Local Development Strategies. These include operating costs, personnel costs, or costs linked to communication and public relations.

Examples of eligible expenditures for running costs may be:

- salaries (co-financing) for the Local Action Group manager and/or other group employees;
- office rent and overheads;
- office materials (stationery etc.);
- purchase of equipment, including IT equipment, furnishing;
- costs linked to communication e.g. websites;
- services (IT specialists, accountants, etc.).

The Local Development Strategy could also contain actions to support small-scale initiatives, the so-called “small projects”. This option is new in IPARD II.

The indicative budget for small projects should be estimated by the Managing Authority. Based on the total budget available for LEADER and the estimated number of Local Action Groups to be supported, the Managing Authority should calculate a reasonable annual budget per LAG for LAG’s activities and may define some (minimum) animation activities and their costs. The rest could be spent on “small projects”.

In managing the LEADER measure and small projects two points should be given special attention. First, reasonableness of costs should be ensured by using a suitable evaluation system, e.g. by presenting different offers, having reference costs also for running costs, setting ceiling for maximum costs, etc. Second, conflict of interest should be avoided, e.g. by checking for links between offer providers and Local Action Group members. It should be also noted that for physical investment projects, the project cannot undergo any significant modification for 5 years.



EU Framework: “SMALL PROJECTS” UNDER IPARD LEADER

These are operations of small value (up to 5,000 EUR) such as e.g. cultural events, promotion of local products, renovation or construction of cultural and natural heritage, development of tourism and recreation area covered by LDS, investment in cultural goods, etc. The small projects shall be proposed and implemented by

the Local Action Groups and their selection and management shall be explained in the Local Development Strategy. Apart from being in line with the strategy, small projects should be non-commercial and open (e.g. participants for trainings should be recruited via public information).

PRACTICAL ADVICE ON LEADER ACCREDITATION

Do’s

- Pay attention to ensure that costs claimed are reasonable (by using database, standard costs, etc.)
- Be clear about avoiding conflict of interest

Don’t:

- Make the procedures more complicated / time consuming for Local Action Groups than necessary.

Has the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to Rural Development (IPARD) already supported any Local Action Groups?

So far Croatia has been the only country to implement the measure with the assistance of IPARD.

EMERGENCE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF IPARD LEADER MEASURE BEFORE ACCESSION (EXAMPLE OF CROATIA)

In the process of post-war renewal under various donor projects, Croatian civil society organisations acquired skills and competences for local partnership building, community participation and development. Work with rural communities led the involved non-governmental organisations in 2002-2006 to discover the European approach to rural development and especially the LEADER concept.

These early capacity building activities culminated in the emergence of the first Croatian rural development network, originally started by seven organisations. A subsequent bilateral assistance project brought the establishment of the first Croatian Local Action Group in 2009, which established its local strategy. Further Local Action Groups followed thanks to various EU projects and training under IPARD. The civil society sector learnt to animate, think strategically beyond one sector and established a strong representation for the dialogue with the central authorities.

Višnja Jelić Mück, a former Chairwoman of the first Croatian rural network says:

"There is still a lot of space and reason to upgrade dialogue on rural development between the civil and public sector and to share tasks. Human capacities for rural development in Croatia are limited and each contribution is valuable. (...) Education, training and awareness raising is of vital importance on all levels and for all actors including state authorities. Start preparing LEADER implementation as early as possible using all available human and material resources. It takes time to bring together local stakeholders, to make them understand the basics of LEADER and capable to create and preserve successful partnerships. Make processes and procedures transparent and open, stimulate dialogue and exchange of views. Don't tend to be more strict than the EC – a common mistake".

The IPARD Technical Assistance and Leader measures started only at the end of the programme period in 2013 just before Croatia joined the EU. 41 Local Action Groups participated in IPARD. Local Action Groups

implemented their local development strategies, by animating the territory, working with potential IPARD beneficiaries and issuing letters of recommendations for IPARD projects compliant with the strategy. The programme also supported capacity building in the territory and Local Action Groups running costs but was more limited than rural development programmes in the EU. Lack of pre-financing for Local Action Groups, changing procedures (especially relating to ensure that the costs claimed were reasonable) were among the main difficulties in the early implementation.

In the beginning of 2017, there were 56 Local Action Groups, three non-governmental rural networks and one national rural network. Although the networking process is to be encouraged, the Croatian Managing Authority sometimes finds it challenging to identify the key interlocutor speaking with one voice on behalf of all of them. Nonetheless, the Managing Authority recognises that IPARD offered a valuable opportunity for the Local Action Groups and the Managing Authority alike to get ready for accession. Without IPARD, implementation of the Rural Development Programme would have been much delayed.



Croatia: Local Action Group Petrova gora (municipality Vojnić). Its territory has high value biodiversity and natural heritage but also faces growing depopulation (photo: courtesy of Croatian Ministry of Agriculture)



LEADER can valorise local crafts in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (photo: courtesy of P. Gjorgjevski)

LEADER APPROACH IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY – THE STATE OF PLAY

In this Section you will find out:

Is LEADER present in the region?

Are the central authorities interested in encouraging LEADER?

Is the civil society sector active in rural development?

Which donors have been active in the area?



- Candidates for EU membership; beneficiaries of Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to Rural Development (IPARD)
- Potential candidates for EU membership
- European Union Member States



Your Journey starts here!

Is LEADER present in the region?

All countries in the Western Balkans and Turkey are interested in setting up the LEADER approach and all of them to a lesser or greater extent have already had some experience of it. They see it not only as part of institutional building in the accession process to the EU, but also as a way of empowering people to develop their local resources and of enhancing social capital.

ALBANIA

Albania has had some limited experience in implementing LEADER-like approaches in the past as almost 30 structures, similar to Local Action Groups, had been created via international and bilateral assistance projects. They have, however, proved unsustainable once the funding stopped. Nonetheless, considerable training had been provided to rural stakeholders, and this knowledge remains in the country. Some 25 civil society organisations have staff trained and are capable to work further. Few rural development strategies exist at local level but there is some experience at sub-regional level strategies. This experience could be used for reinforcing LEADER in the future.

Albania has a keen interest in establishing and developing the LEADER-like approach. To this end, the IPARD programme in Albania will support the preparatory actions under the Technical Assistance and, later on, the implementation, under the LEADER measure. However, these actions are not yet advanced at all, and could realistically only start in a few years. Legal conditions for Local Action Groups also need to be defined.

The Albanian rural network started in 2015 with eighteen civil-society organizations with consolidated profiles in rural development and soon was joined by nine others. The

network is looking forward to involving the future Local Action Groups.

Sotirag Hroni, Chairman of the Albanian Network for Rural Development says:

“Knowledge on LEADER in Albania is rather limited or not complete even for the key institutions. Furthermore, LEADER is still far away from being a vision of public authorities.

Implementing LEADER becomes more complex because it is basically a bottom up approach based on tri partite partnership among the business community and civil society in the rural areas along with public authorities. Each of the components of this partnership needs more knowledge and empowerment (...).

For societies like Albania and the development challenges in remote and rural areas, there is no other way than empower citizens and institutions to share responsibilities. LEADER can foster development, economic growth, devolve power and make democracy work. As for this, donors have a role, too.”

THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The LEADER approach is not a new topic in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Different bottom-up initiatives were supported by various donors in the recent past. They aimed at building and strengthening the social and human capital in rural areas and the development of small businesses.

The LEADER approach has been gradually promoted in the country since 2005 through various donor initiatives. Their



Study visit to the “Meshini” Dairy in Permet with members of the “Pro Skrapar” public-private agency to learn production techniques of traditional dairy products. (photo: courtesy of National Rural Development Network of Albania).



Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, members of Local Action Group “Belasica-Ograzden” (photo: courtesy of National Rural Development Network).

aim has been to build up and enhance social and human capital within the rural areas but also to develop micro enterprises, local handcraft and small trade, tourism etc. There are currently 16 pre-Local Action Groups, five of which have a proper structure and Local Development Strategies.

The country intends to use IPARD support for LEADER initially through the measure Technical Assistance, while the start of the LEADER measure itself is envisaged in 2019.

The non-governmental sector in the country, although already organised in the National Rural Development Network, is weak, especially in rural areas and sees the LEADER-like developments as an opportunity to learn and grow. Petar Gjorgievski, the chairman of the Network points out:

“Local Action Groups are new for us. They know the situation in rural areas and the problems faced by people who live in these areas, and will act in unifying and synchronizing the actions of their territories. The challenge is great because all the actors in the local communities will need to take joint responsibility and ownership for the development of the rural areas.”

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BY LOCAL ACTION GROUP ABER, THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA



Training of local guides in Kokino archaeological site (photo: courtesy of P. Gjorgievski).

Discovered in 2001, Kokino is an ancient observatory site with potential to grow into a major tourist attraction if managed correctly.

In 2015, with coaching and financial support from USAID, the newly formed Local Action Group (LAG) Aber

and the Kumanovo Museum (a member of the group) initiated a pilot Local Action Group project to improve the tourism infrastructure on Kokino and to increase the visibility of the site as a prime tourism destination in the country. A small pilot project (of 5 000 dollars) financed the basic fence around the area to protect it, provided signposts and information boards, a website and an audio guide and trained tour guides for the area.

The national rural development network, established in 2010 has been active in promoting LEADER. As of spring 2017, the network brings together 80 non-governmental organisations as members and is working closely with about 1 500 rural leaders. Through its member organisations, it is interacting with some 100 000 rural inhabitants in the country and has a voice in the national rural development policy making. It is a good basis for future LEADER developments.

MONTENEGRO

Montenegro intends to pursue a balanced territorial development of rural areas as one of the national policy goals. The LEADER-like approach would be one of the tools to this end at the local level. Support is envisaged under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to Rural Development (IPARD), albeit it will effectively start at the second stage of implementation, the earliest from 2018.



Small farms in the north of Montenegro (photo courtesy of Dick van Dijk)

Examples of cooperation between the private and public sector exist already at the local level and will be further encouraged.

The only Local Development Strategy prepared with support from FAO in the municipality of Pljevlja expired in 2015. Currently there are no Local Action Groups in Montenegro and knowledge of LEADER is generally limited.

Nonetheless the National Rural Development Network has been actively promoting the LEADER approach since 2012. Currently it has 18 member non-government organisations and plays an important role in mobilising the civil society in rural areas and promoting the concept of rural development. In 2013 the Network concluded an agreement with the Rural Development Networks of Serbia and of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with which a Rural Development Network for the Balkans was established.

One of the most active members of the Montenegrin rural network is the Regional Development Agency for Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije. In 2016 and 2017 it co-operated with the South Eastern Europe Regional Rural Development Standing Group (SWG) on preparing a strategy for the development of the area and already has some pilot projects that can be supported through LEADER.

SERBIA

The implementation of the LEADER approach is important to Serbia in order to mobilize the population from the local rural areas, utilize socio-economic resources and identify local actors. National policy and support from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to Rural Development (IPARD) is envisaged first under the Technical Assistance measure, and

in the second phase of the IPARD Programme from 2019 under the LEADER measure.

The LEADER approach was introduced in Serbia in 2007 by UNDP and in the period 2011–2012 was supported by an EU funded project “Capacity construction for the establishment and implementation of LEADER in Serbia”, which resulted in 21 Local Action Groups initiatives, covering 8% of the population and about 15% of the territory of the country. In the run-up to IPARD implementation in 2019, potential Local Action Groups and preparation for the LEADER measure will be supported from national resources. At the moment from the 21 potential Local Action Groups 12 are active. All of them have prepared local development strategies in accordance with EU methodology.

Knowledge and interest in LEADER in Serbia is high, despite the lack of financing in the last few years. There is a core group of more than 20 non-government organisations,



Food and Tourism Fair in Serbia. Local Action Group “Srem +” was among organizers (photo: courtesy of Serbian Managing Authority)

regional development agencies and institutes, gathered around “National LEADER Network” and “Network for Rural Development in Serbia”, with their leaders and members, who are highly active in this field. Ivana Stefanović Ristin, President of National LEADER Network in Serbia notes:

“Civil society working on rural development in Serbia needs sustained, organised support by the EU in the areas of human capacity, finance, planning and development. Meanwhile, however, the voice of rural areas is not as pronounced as the more politically stronger advocates such as human rights, democracy, etc.”

TURKEY

Turkey has included the development of the LEADER-like approach in its National Rural Development Strategy 2014-2020, and is especially looking to enhance the local district level governance and try new ways of delivering services to rural areas.

Since 2008 when the concept was introduced in Turkey 25 Local Action Groups have been established with the support of IPARD 2007-2013. Support is planned to establish another 20 Local Action Groups in 2017 and to help the first group set up their local development strategies. Turkey intends to launch the LEADER measure in early 2018 when a sufficient number of mature Local Action Groups are in place. There is a keen interest in these groups not only from the Ministry of Agriculture but also from the Ministry of Development.

There are many stakeholder organisations present in rural Turkey, but mostly related to farming such as chambers of agriculture, producer unions, and agricultural and village cooperatives. The non-governmental organisations outside agriculture are few, especially in the east of Turkey and in the Black Sea region. Ibrahim Tugrul, from the Development Foundation of Turkey, member of the IPARD Monitoring Committee sees a clear role for the LEADER approach in Turkey:

“Under the existing conditions, the public bodies and NGO type civil society organizations are sceptic to one another. Generally, public bodies do not like the critical approach of the civil society organizations and civil society organizations are afraid of the domination of the public bodies. Through an active facilitation process these problems can be overcome, and implementation of LEADER measure can provide a base for establishing a dialogue process and cooperation between public bodies and civil society organizations. Implementation of the LEADER measure would contribute not only cooperation between the public bodies and rural NGOs, but also involvement of the local agricultural chambers, producers unions and cooperatives



Training of LEADER animators in Turkey in 2016. (photo: courtesy of Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock)

in integrated rural development activities at local levels. These processes would also contribute to the development of a synergy between rural stakeholders and social capital at local level”.

Turkey has not yet established a formal Rural Development Network, although there had been previous informal initiatives, but its launch is planned for 2017. Awareness of LEADER is still limited, but growing thanks to ongoing publicity actions.



LEADER publicity in the Turkish media (courtesy of Turkish Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Livestock)

KOSOVO⁸

Local Action Groups in Kosovo were set up in the period 2007-2009 under the initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development and with the support of the EU Office in Kosovo. In that period, 30 Local Action Groups were established - one in each municipality of Kosovo.

In the period 2014-2020 all Local Action Groups have been invited to apply with their local strategies for this period. At the beginning of 2015, 12 LAGs and the Rural Development

⁸ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



Organization of a local fair by LAG "Agro Vitia" (photo: courtesy of LAG Agro Vitia, Kosovo)

Network were approved by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development for funding under three measures, similar to the ones to be financed under IPARD.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Activities related to development of Local Action Groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina started in 2003 with the UNDP project "Partnership for the Development of Local Projects". More than 100 private-public partnerships were established, although they were not Local Action Groups in terms of the LEADER approach. After the project ended, only three LAGs continued their activities. In the period 2009-2011, four more Local Action Groups were formed with support from



Medieval tombstones - cultural heritage in the area of LAG Devetak (photo: courtesy of LAG Devetak, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and three more - on initiative of associations' members, without the support of international organizations or projects.

The Local Action Groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina make every effort to comply with the LEADER principles but the main problem remains the lack of support for their activities from the public sector. Some of the earliest Local Action Groups have stopped working, while the more recently formed ones are more successful.

The Rural Development Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina was established in 2014. The Network has 18 members, of which 5 are Local Action Groups.

Bilateral assistance to boost LEADER approach in the Western Balkans and Turkey

A wide range of donors have been active to promote the LEADER like approach in the Western Balkans and Turkey. The projects relevant to LEADER go far beyond the approach itself. They cover local planning, participative approaches, strengthening the civil society, conflict management, etc. which can be collectively termed as strengthening of social capital. They offer a valuable contribution to the readiness of the Western Balkans and Turkey for LEADER.

EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) has also been active through institution building in supporting the civil sector and the central administration.

The main donors active in the area include: the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, Oxfam, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUNC) and bilateral assistance between the governments.

PRACTICAL ADVICE ON LEADER CAPACITY BUILDING AND BUILDING OF WIDER SOCIAL CAPITAL

Do's

Make use of a wide range of sources (in the EU funding, bilateral assistance and multilateral assistance) to

reinforce civil society, wider social capital, local planning and broad LEADER-related skills.

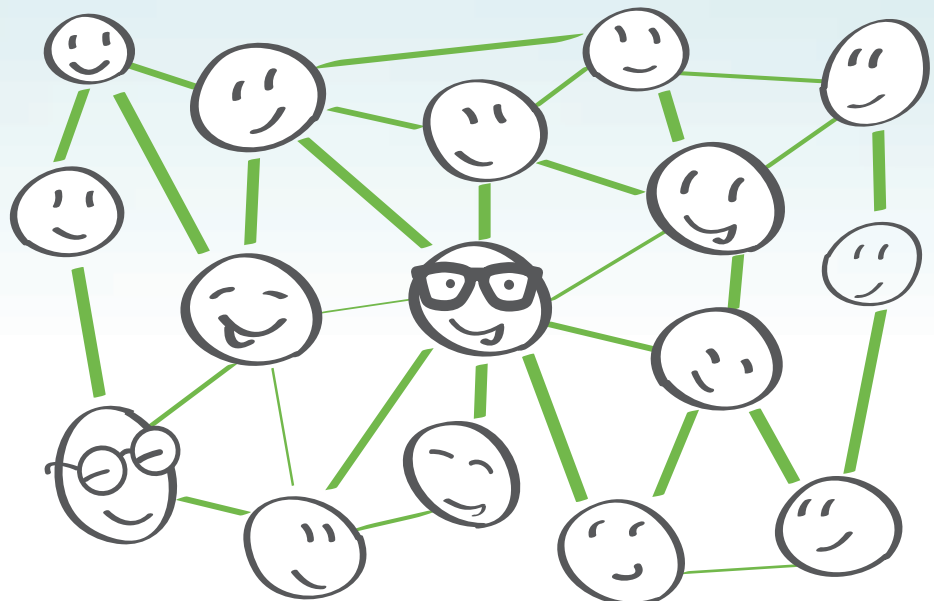
NETWORKING

In this Section you will find out:

How can Local Action Groups network and learn from each other?

What is the European Network for Rural Development?

Are there any other networks?



How can Local Action Groups network and learn from each other?

National rural networks

IPARD supports beneficiary countries to establish national rural networks as done in the EU Member States. These networks should group the organisations, individuals and administrations involved in rural development. Their tasks are to organise exchange of information and experience between the members, identify good rural development practices and prepare training programmes for Local Action Groups in the process of formation.

The establishment and operation of national rural development networks is supported under the measure Technical Assistance and is of crucial importance for the success of the programme.

WHAT IS THE EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT?



European Network for Rural Development

The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) serves as a hub for exchange of information on how Rural Development policy, programmes, projects and other initiatives are working in practice and how they can be improved to achieve more.

The main stakeholders in the ENRD are: the national rural networks in the EU Member States, the Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies, the Local Action Groups (LAGs), European organisations, agricultural advisory services, and agricultural and rural researchers. The activities of the ENRD are supported by the Contact Point based in Brussels. Both the ENRD and the National Rural Networks are financed under EU rural development funds.

One of the capacity building priorities of the ENRD is to promote simpler and more effective LEADER. The ENRD is therefore active in promoting and supporting the implementation and improvement of LEADER by organizing learning events and activities, a database of LAGs and cooperation projects, partners' search and producing publications on the core aspects of LEADER. The ENRD also participates in or contributes to LEADER events organised in Member States especially when these involve Local Action Groups or National Rural Networks from multiple Member States. The relevant information is published regularly on the website of the Network where there is a specific section devoted to LEADER. LEADER also regularly features in the ENRD newsletter. Beyond LEADER, the ENRD also has a more general task to support the exchange concerning actions and experience in the field of rural development with networks in third countries.

The institutions, academics and LAGs from the Western Balkans and Turkey may participate in the events depending on availability of places. Please check the ENRD website for details on upcoming events.

Sharing experience within the European Network for Rural Development



WHAT ARE THE OTHER NETWORKS? European Leader Association For Rural Development (Elard)

Based on contribution from Pedro Brosei, ELARD

The European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD) is the European Network of national Local Action Groups networks. It works as an international non-profit making association based in Brussels to promote the LEADER approach as part of rural development policies and to defend the interests of the Local Action Groups on European level. It also promotes the exchange of information between the national Local Action Groups networks and ultimately all Local Action Groups in Europe.

At present, 22 national Local Action Group networks from EU countries are members of ELARD. The Rural Development Network of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Serbian LEADER Network are also members. From the beginning of its existence ELARD has helped emerging Local Action Groups networks in pre-accession countries to foster their networking and to participate in the exchange at European level. There are also close contacts with organisations in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

ELARD is currently working on expanding its membership base even further, especially among the new Member States and the pre-accession countries in an effort to create a culturally and nationally diverse front united by the common goal of a sustainable and viable rural Europe. The association is committed to involving all stakeholders in local rural development.

PREPARE

Based on contribution by Goran Soster, PREPARE asbl

PREPARE is an international NGO, gathering national umbrella rural organisations (one per country) from Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and through the two pan-European organisations also Belgium and United Kingdom. Since late 90s, PREPARE has been providing a valid input into EU policy making and served as a good platform for learning, especially for LEADER, development of rural civil society and animation. PREPARE has basically three methods of working: international projects, bi-annual gathering and travelling workshops.

PREPARE is also active in wider EU rural forums such as the European Rural Parliaments⁹ organised every two years by ELARD – European LEADER Association for Rural Development and ERCA – European Rural Community Association together with PREPARE.

⁹ More about European Rural Parliament at www.europeanruralparliament.com



PREPARE gathering in Albania (2016) (photo: courtesy of Goran Soster).

South Eastern Europe Regional Rural Development Standing Group (SWG)

SWG is an international organisation for cooperation and exchanges of experience on agricultural rural development policies, especially those in relation to EU accession. The organisation works with the European Commission and other donors to develop policy research, analysis, and cross border grant projects. The organisation serves as a useful learning platform for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, and occasionally Turkey. The organisation also aims to build bridges between the public administrations, governments, NGOs and academics for a more consolidated fact-based policy setting.

SWG is also currently involved in promoting the LEADER approach amongst its members by identifying key barriers to LEADER in the region, establishing and disseminating good practices in this field.



Kick-off meeting of the expert group on LEADER on the assessment of the application on LEADER approach in the Western Balkan countries, Skopje 2017 (photo: courtesy of the SWG).

Balkan Rural Development Network (BRDN)

BRDN is a regional platform of NGO-based rural development networks in the Western Balkans. BRDN brings together the rural development networks from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo¹⁰.

The rural development networks – members of BRDN, aim to keep rural development on the political agenda in the Western Balkan countries, promote exchange and joint initiatives between the member networks and maintain contacts with similar networks elsewhere in Europe.

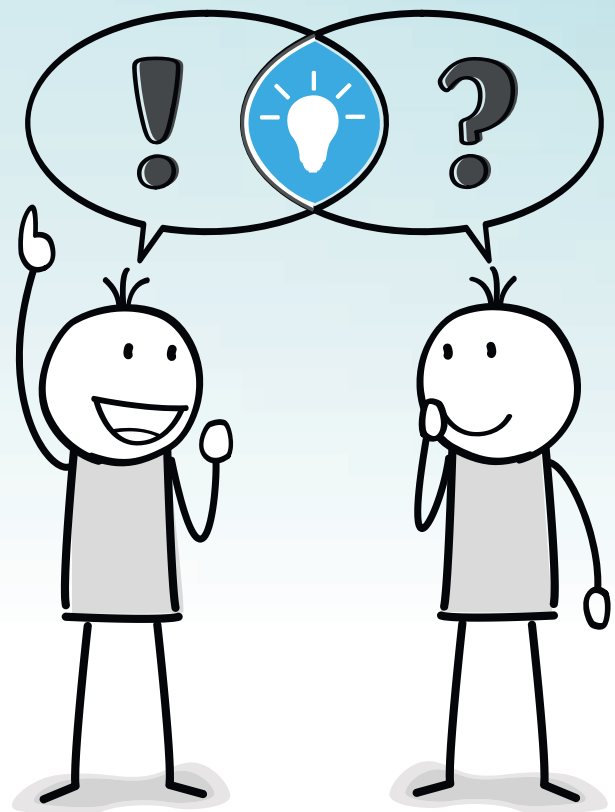
¹⁰ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



INNOVATION

Using LEADER approach to address current political priorities:

helping the integration of refugees



Transform Your Thinking!

LEADER assisting the integration of refugees

LEADER can be used in a flexible way to respond to changing priorities and political developments. Local Action Groups have the potential to play a key role in supporting the integration of migrants in rural areas either through

animation, advice, training and capacity building or by bringing together the different stakeholder groups – municipalities, social services, NGOs, and other actors. Below are some examples.

LEADER HELPING THE INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES “WELCOME CULTURE” IN BAD BERLEBURG¹¹

The German LAG in Bad Berleburg provides housing with a central accommodation facility for refugees. Since 2014, around 5 000 people were housed. Of these, 570 stayed in the town, representing 3% of the total population. The newly selected LEADER project “Welcome Culture” is now developing further activities – round tables, youth cafes, and an integration bus – to further promote the positive potential of refugees for the town.

THE ORUST EXAMPLE

The island of Orust off the western coast of Sweden is the third largest in Sweden, with a population of around 15 000, of which 1 000 live in a small town called Ellos. A refugee camp housing 150 asylum seekers is located in this town, a significant number considering the size of the local population. To overcome the local population's initial fears and concerns about security and create a “welcoming culture”, the owner of the camp invited local organisations, such as the Red Cross, the church, football clubs and theatre groups, to a talk on cooperation and

on how to give the newcomers the possibility to establish themselves in the community. Positive messages were also spread via social media.

“Many people were talking about this in a good way, so almost directly when the refugees arrived, the camp and these local organisations started to arrange meeting places, where the local inhabitants had the possibility to meet the refugees – and once you get to know people, they become friends,” says Maria Gustafsson, manager of the Swedish Rural Network and an Orust resident. Volunteer teachers went to the camp to help refugees learn Swedish. Local employers offered internships to asylum seekers, particularly linked to their existing skills, including in farming, veterinary, nursing and mechanics. Refugees also became involved in cultural activities, particularly a ukelele group – so much so that the leaders of the group decided to move their rehearsals to the camp. Numbers shot up from 30–40 to more than 150 members and they even started to tour the region together.



Photo: Germany: helping with the homework

The rural areas themselves have benefitted. Ms Gustafsson explains: *“In my village, the school for ages 13 and over had recently closed down before the refugee camp, but the school has now reopened.”* Reviving rural populations also helps maintain hospitals and doctors’ surgeries. *“Those that come think that there are more possibilities in urban areas, so we need to... show them how much possibility they have locally,”* concludes Ms Gustafsson.

¹¹ Reproduced from European Rural Development Network (2016) EU Rural Review Nr 21 «Rural responses to challenges in Europe».

References:

Archived publications on LEADER in the EU:

<http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leader2/rural-en/biblio/index.htm>

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-static/leader/en/leader_en.html

Guide on the establishment of Local Development Strategy:

<http://rdwiki/layouts/15/rdwiki.agri/rdwikidoc.aspx?URL=/Thematic/LeaderCLLD/Other/LEADERLDS>

“The Guide on Design and Implementation of LEADER Local Development Design Strategies”, European Rural Development Network, 2016

[http://rdwiki/RDWikiDocuments/Thematic/LeaderCLLD/Other/LEADERLDS/LEADER%20local%20development%20strategies.%20Guidance%20on%20design%20and%20implementation%20\(May-2016\).pdf](http://rdwiki/RDWikiDocuments/Thematic/LeaderCLLD/Other/LEADERLDS/LEADER%20local%20development%20strategies.%20Guidance%20on%20design%20and%20implementation%20(May-2016).pdf)

LEADER Toolkit (from European Development Network 2007-2013):

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-static/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/leader-tool-kit/leader_approach_en.pdf

European Rural Development Network (2016) EU Rural Review Nr 21 “Rural responses to challenges in Europe”

<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/publi-enrd-rr-21-2016-en.pdf>

Court of Auditors (2010), “Implementation of LEADER approach for rural development”.

http://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR10_05/SR10_05_EN.PDF

Networks:

European Network for Rural Development (ENRD):

https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/home-page_en

Balkan Rural Development Network (BRDN):

www.brdnetwork.net

The European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD):

www.elard.eu

South Eastern Europe Regional Rural Development Standing Group (SWG):

<http://seerural.org/about-us/>

PREPARE:

<http://www.preparenetwork.org/>

South Eastern Europe Regional Rural Development Standing Group (SWG):

<http://seerural.org/about-us/>

Contacts in the European Commission

Directorate General Agriculture and Rural Development:

https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/index_en

Unit E.5 Pre-accession assistance to rural development:

AGRI-E.5@ec.europa.eu

Key contacts in the Western Balkans and Turkey:

Albania

Managing Authority:
www.bujqesia.gov.al

IPARD website:
www.axzhbr.gov.al

Albanian Network for Rural Development:
<http://anrd.al>

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Managing Authority:
<http://ipard.gov.mk/mk/>

IPARD Agency:
http://www.ipardpa.gov.mk/Root/mak/default_mak.asp

National Network for Rural Development:
<http://ruralnet.mk/>

Montenegro

IPARD website:
www.minpolj.gov.me//rubrike/IPARD_program

National Network for Rural Development:
www.ruralportal.me

Serbia

Managing Authority:
<http://www.mpzss.gov.rs/>

National LEADER network:
www.leader.org.rs

Turkey

IPARD website:
www.ipard.gov.tr

IPARD Agency:
www.tkdk.gov.tr

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Rural Development Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina:
www.ruralnamreza.ba

Kosovo¹²

Managing Authority:
<http://www.mbpzhr-ks.net/en/department-of-rural-development-policy-managing-authority-drdma>

¹² This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

