



European Network for  
Rural Development

# **LEADER LAG Survey 2017**

**Working Paper**

**Findings at Member State level**

**Member State: Belgium**

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## Introduction

The ENRD Contact Point (ENRD CP) launched a survey of LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs) in November 2017 to explore on the ground experiences of implementing LEADER from the LAG perspective. Drawing on the ENRD LAG database over 2,200 LAGs were contacted and 710 confidential responses were received from 27 EU Member States making this the largest and most comprehensive LEADER survey conducted. LAGs from 19 national and 70 regional Rural Development Programme (RDP) 'territories' responded. Germany, France, Spain, Czech Republic and Austria provided over 50% of the total responses.

The online survey included 38 questions in four sections and the questionnaire was provided in six languages. Each section addressed several key themes. The main chapters of this report follow the structure of the questionnaire and are as follows:

1. Basic LAG data.
2. LEADER principles.
3. LEADER operation.
4. LEADER improvements.

**This working paper has been prepared by the ENRD Contact Point and its content does not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission.** The order of results presented for each question is consistent with the ranking from [the EU level report](#) to enable direct comparison. Please note that this report **does not present a comparative analysis** but where clear and significant differences are evident between the Member State LAG responses and the overall survey sample these have been highlighted.

**In this paper all references to LAGs relate specifically to those LAGs who responded to the survey.**

### Explanatory points

The questionnaire used a multiple choice format allowing respondents to choose the answers most appropriate to their LAG's circumstances. The text of some questions has been simplified in the charts that follow. The full text of each question and all possible answers are listed in the sections below.

The total number of responses for each question is recorded individually as response levels varied between questions throughout the survey.

Questions three, five and six of the original questionnaire are not relevant for this paper being primarily for survey management and have been omitted. Where necessary a limited level of data cleaning has been undertaken to ensure consistency and correct obvious errors.

Please note that there is a degree of variation in the number of responses by RDP and question. Where relevant this should be taken into account when considering or interpreting the wider implications of the findings for some questions. It is not possible to reflect regional RDP differences e.g. the date of RDP approval although this may explain some of the variations within regionalised Member State responses. For example, the date of RDP approval will influence the timing of LAG selection and approval and subsequent LAG actions.

## Basic Implementation Data

### Question 1

*Please select your country*

- Belgium (BE)
- 8 LAGs responded, representing 1.13% of total LAG responses
- 25% of BE LAGs responded to the survey

*Total Number of Responses 8*

## Question 2

Please select your Rural Development Programme (RDP)

- BE has two regional RDPs, Flanders and Wallonia.

For each programme, there were 4 responses.

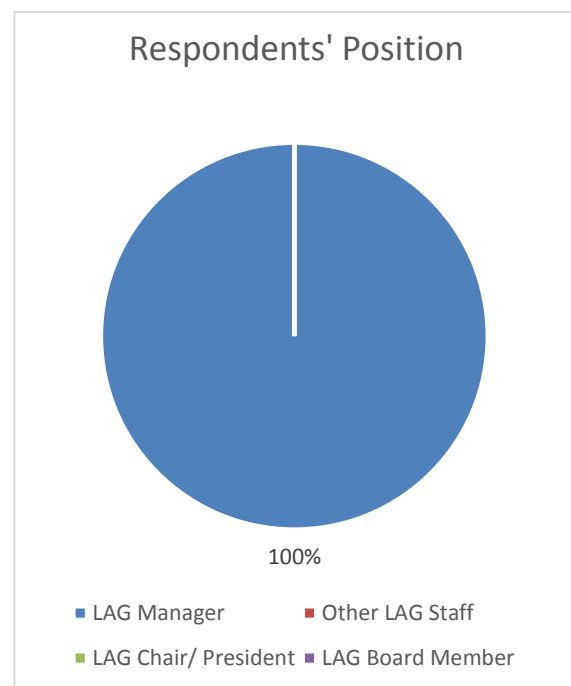
Total Number of Responses 8

## Question 4

Respondents were asked to identify which position they held within the LAG.

- LAG Manager
- Other LAG staff
- LAG Chair /President
- LAG Board Member

Total Number of Responses 8



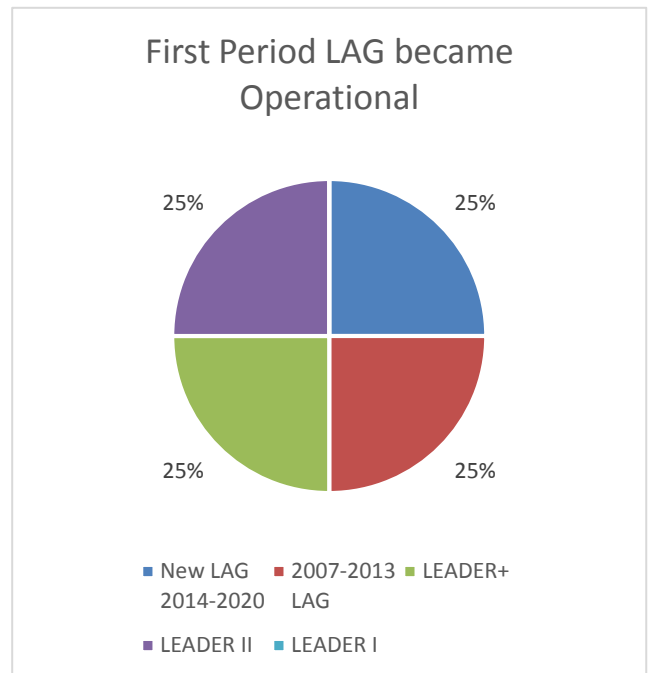
### Question 7

*In which period did your LAG first begin its operation? Please select the option that applies to you. (i.e. point from where there is a significant degree of continuity in membership or territory)*

- Newly established LAG (2014-2020 Programming Period)
- the 2007-2013 Programming Period
- LEADER+
- LEADER II
- LEADER I

#### Total Number of Responses 8

- The respondents distributed evenly across four periods of LAG creation, while no respondent originated from the LEADER I period.
- Belgian LAG responses included a larger proportion of older LAGs from LEADER II and LEADER+, than the EU sample average.
- Similarly to the EU (22%), 25% of Belgian LAGS were 'newly established' (2014-2020).

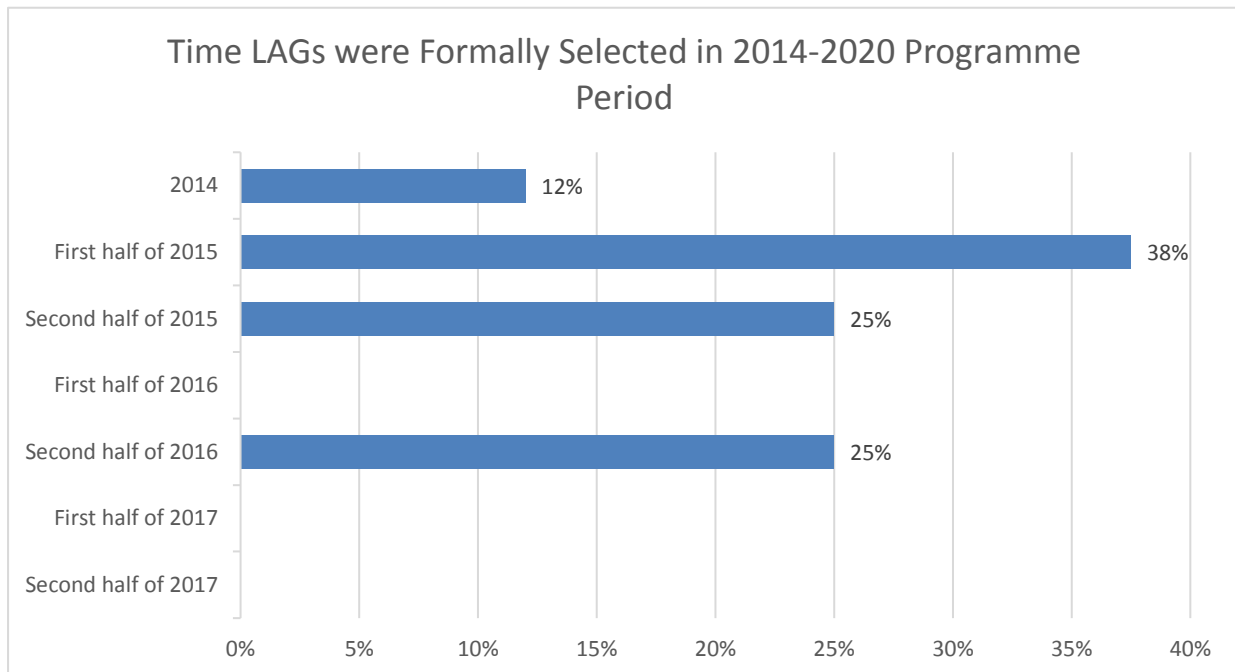


### Question 8

When was your LAG formally selected in this (2014-2020) Programming Period?

- 2014
- First half of 2015 (Jan - June)
- Second half of 2015 (July – December)
- First half of 2016
- Second half of 2016
- First half of 2017
- Second half of 2017

Total Number of Responses 8



- The 8 Belgian LAGs had a relatively early start and all were formally selected by the end of 2016.
- At EU level 59% of LAGs had been selected by the end of 2015 as opposed to 75% of Belgian LAGs.

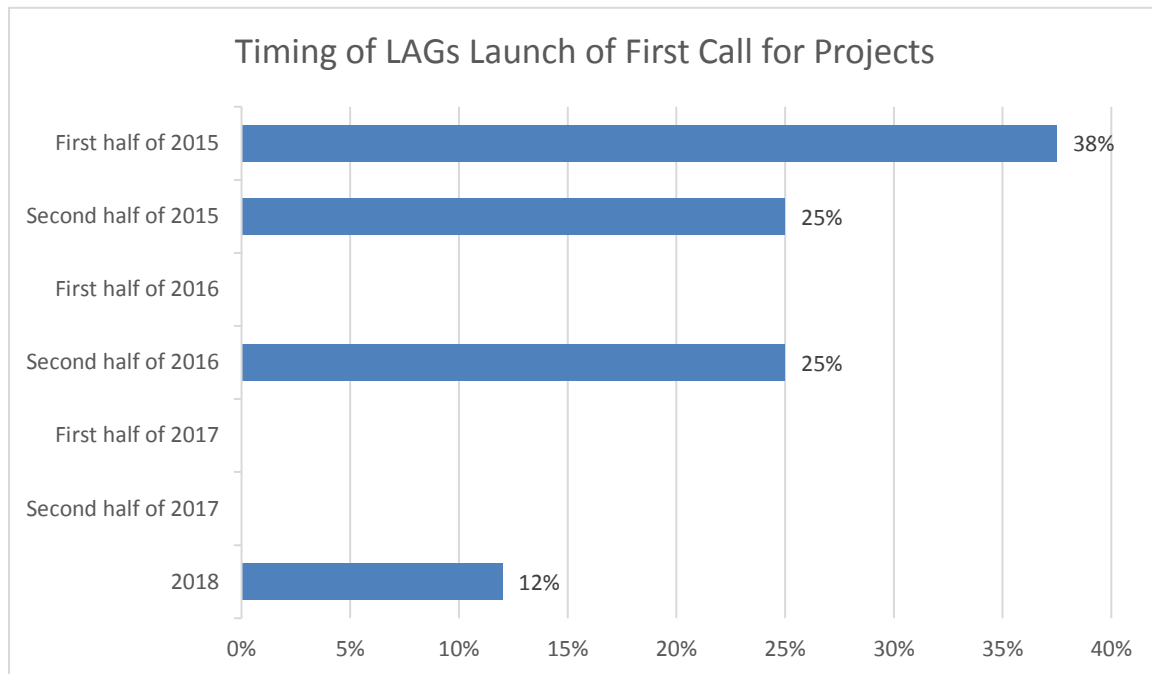


### Question 9

*When did / will your LAG first launch a call for projects?*

- First half of 2015
- Second half of 2015
- First half of 2016
- Second half of 2016
- First half of 2017
- Second half of 2017
- 2018

*Total Number of Responses 8*



- 63% of responding LAGs in Belgium had launched a project call by the end of 2015 compared to 32% of the EU respondents.
- A greater proportion of Belgian LAGs had launched calls by the end of 2016, with 88% of LAGs launching their first calls for projects in contrast to 67% of EU LAGs.

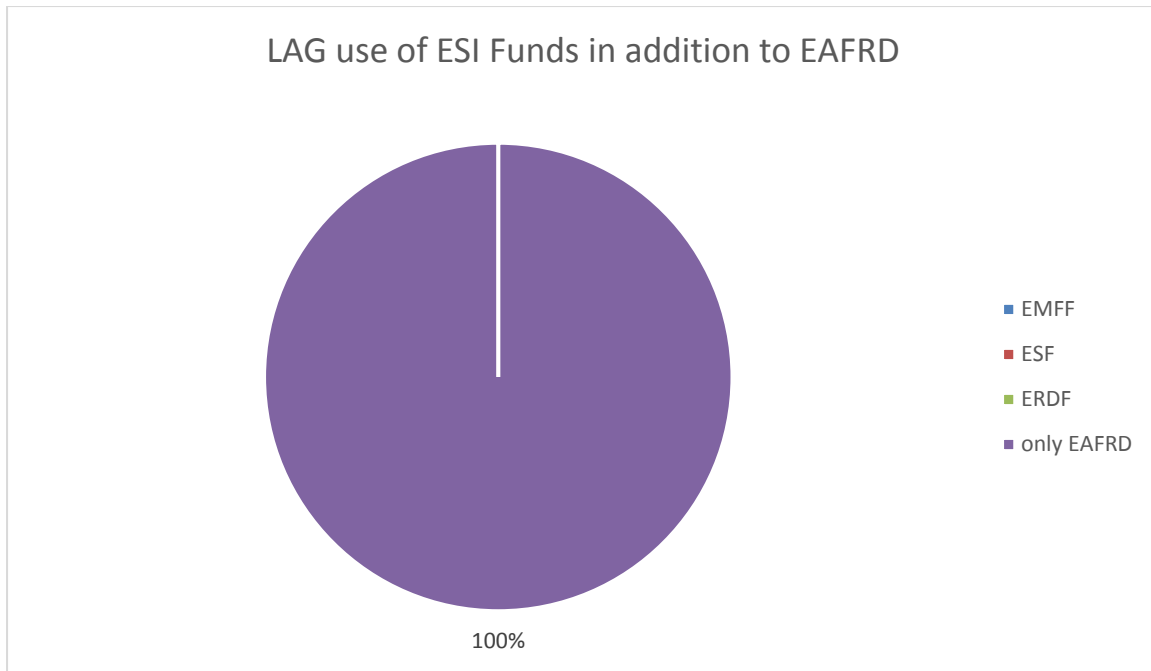
## LAG Funding

### Question 10

Please select all the European Structural and Investment Funds that your LAG uses to financing your Local Development Strategy (in addition to EAFRD).

- European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)
- European Social Fund (ESF)
- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
- None of the above (only EAFRD)

Total Number of Responses 8



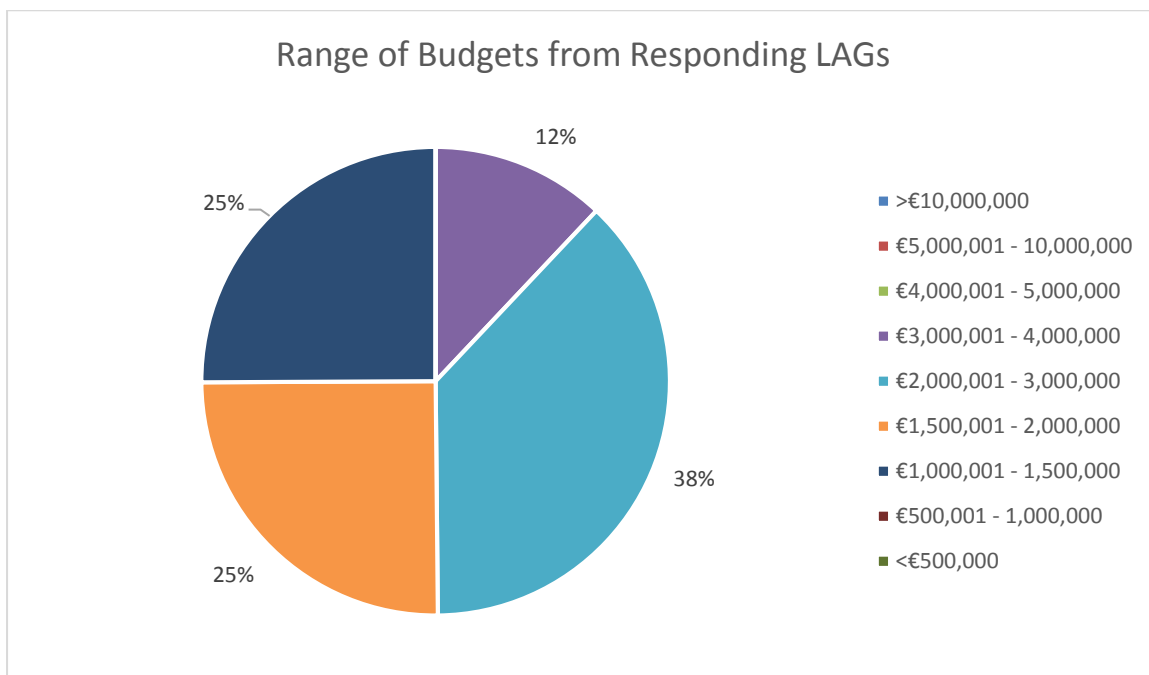
- All of the 8 Belgian LAGs responding indicated that they only used EAFRD; none used multiple funds, compared to a third of all respondent LAGS at EU level (33%).

### Question 11

What is your LAG budget (total public expenditure Euro, i.e. EAFRD plus all other EU and domestic public funds) for the 2014-2020 Programming Period? Please provide your best estimate if data are not available.

- < €500,000
- €500,001 – 1,000,000
- €1,000,001 – 1,500,000
- €1,500,001 – 2,000,000
- €2,000,001 – 3,000,000
- €3,000,001 – 4,000,000
- €4,000,001- 5,000,000
- €5,000,001 – 10,000,000
- >€10,000,000

Total Number of Responses 8



- The Belgian LAGs who responded had total public expenditure budgets between €1m to €4m; by comparison 29% of LAGs from the EU sample had budgets above €4m.
- 50% of Belgian LAGs had budgets exceeding €2m in contrast to 73% at the EU level.

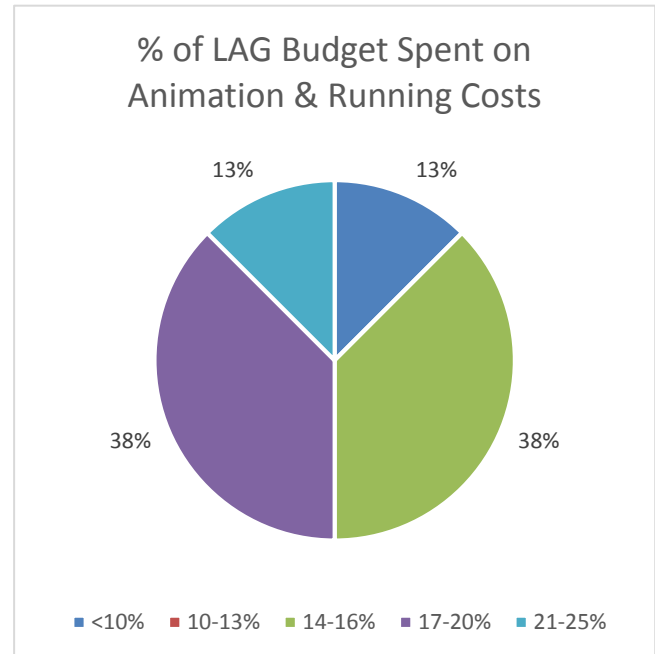
### Question 12

What % of this total LAG budget is allocated to running costs and animation?

- < 10%
- 10 – 13%
- 14 – 16%
- 17 – 20%
- 21 -25%

Total Number of Responses 8

- Half of the Belgian LAGs reported a running costs and animation budget allocation of over 17%. This is slightly lower than that for the EU (50% vs 64%).
- Only 13% of the respondents indicated that they had a budget over 21% in comparison to 31% at EU level.



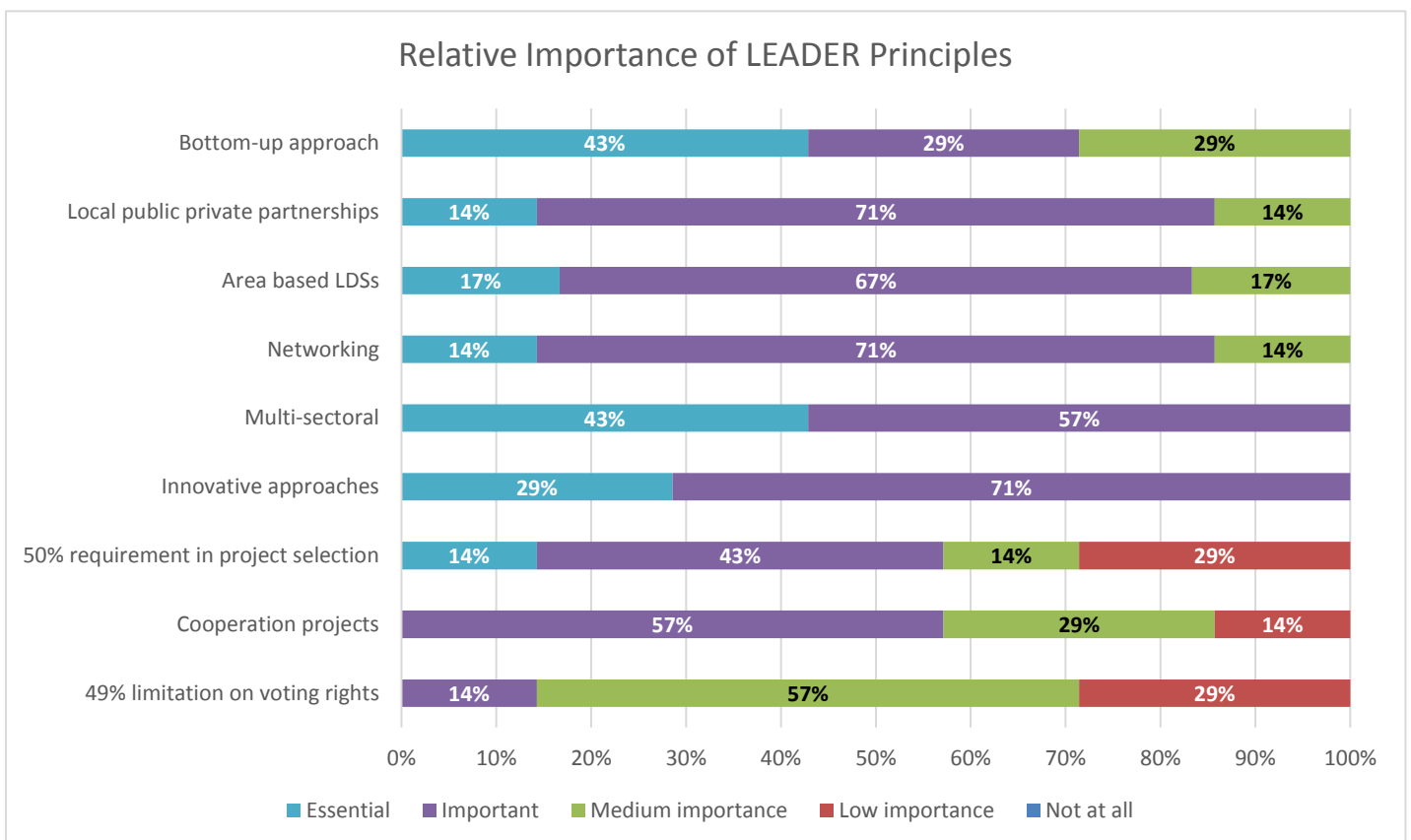
## LEADER Principles

### Question 13

How important are each of the following LEADER principles for your LAG in delivering real benefits on the ground? (Please rate each option from 1= not at all to 5 = essential).

- Area-based local development strategies intended for well-identified sub-regional rural territories.
- Local public-private partnerships (local action groups).
- Bottom-up approach with decision-making power for local action groups concerning the elaboration and implementation of local development strategies.
- The 49% limitation on voting rights of any single interest group.
- The 50% requirement for non-public sector votes in project selection.
- Multi-sectoral design and implementation of the strategy based on interaction between actors and projects of different sectors of the local economy.
- Implementation of innovative approaches.
- Implementation of cooperation projects.
- Networking of local partnerships.

Total Number of Responses 7



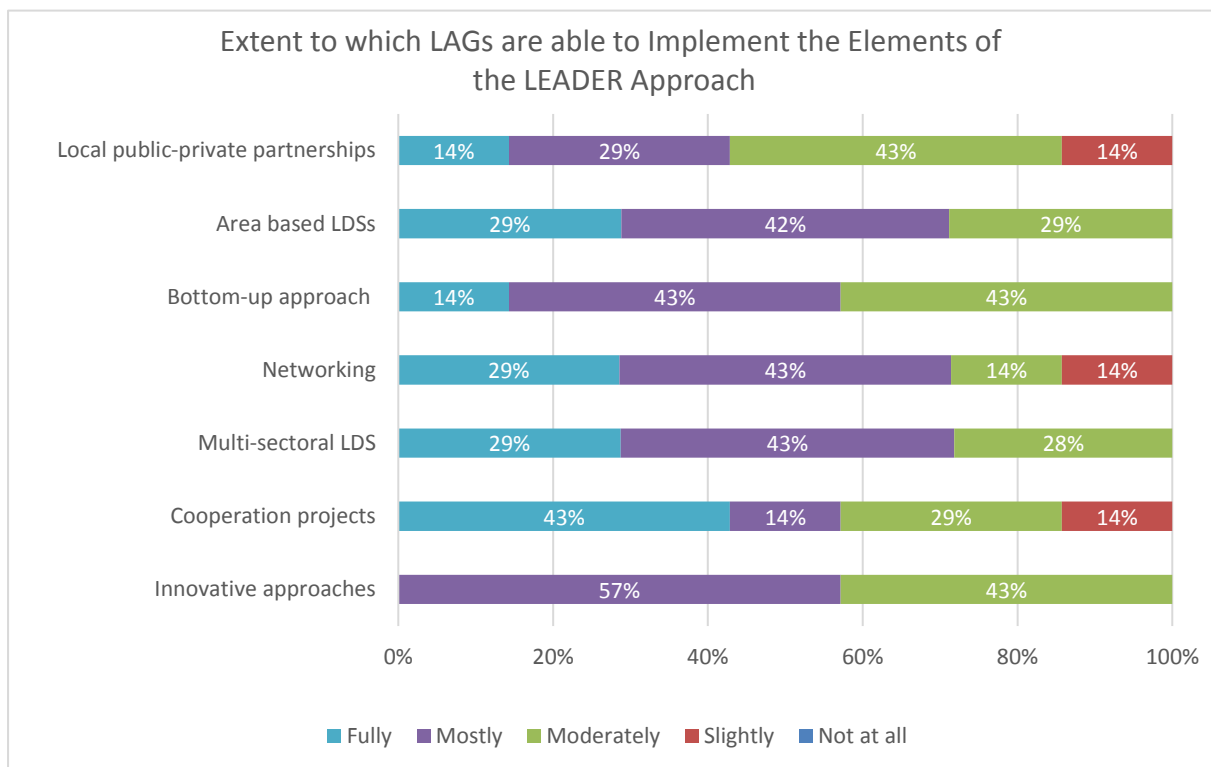
- The responding Belgian LAGs generally placed lower essential rankings on the principles than the EU average, when essential and important rankings are taken together the differences are much smaller.
- The greatest variance was with regard to the 49% limitation on voting rights which scored much lower in Belgium than overall (14% essential or important vs 53% for the EU).
- Belgian LAGs rated 'multi-sectoral' and the 'bottom-up approach' as the most 'essential' of all the LEADER principles (both at 43%). In the case of the bottom-up approach this proportion of LAGs was considerably smaller than that at the EU level (73%).
- When Belgian LAG's essential and important ratings are taken together both 'multisectoral' and 'innovative approaches' score highest overall with 100%, this compares to 76% and 68% respectively in the full sample. Bottom up then ranks only 6<sup>th</sup> in overall importance in Belgium.

### Question 14

To what extent is your LAG able to implement the following elements of the LEADER approach? (please rate each option from 1-5, where 1= not at all, 5 = fully)

- Area-based local development strategies intended for well-identified sub-regional rural territories.
- Local public-private partnerships (local action groups).
- Bottom-up approach with decision-making power for local action groups concerning the elaboration and implementation of local development strategies.
- Multi-sectoral design and implementation of the strategy based on interaction between actors and projects of different sectors of the local economy.
- Implementation of innovative approaches.
- Implementation of cooperation projects.
- Networking of local partnerships.

Total Number of Responses 7



- The extent to which Belgian respondents were able to ‘fully’ or ‘mostly’ implement the elements of the LEADER approach was broadly in line with the EU sample but Belgian ‘fully’ responses are markedly lower overall with the exception of cooperation.
- However, their ability to ‘fully’ or ‘mostly’ implement the ‘bottom-up approach’ (57% vs 77%) and to work as ‘local public-private partnerships’ (43% vs 87%) was considerably lower than that of EU LAGs.

### Question 15

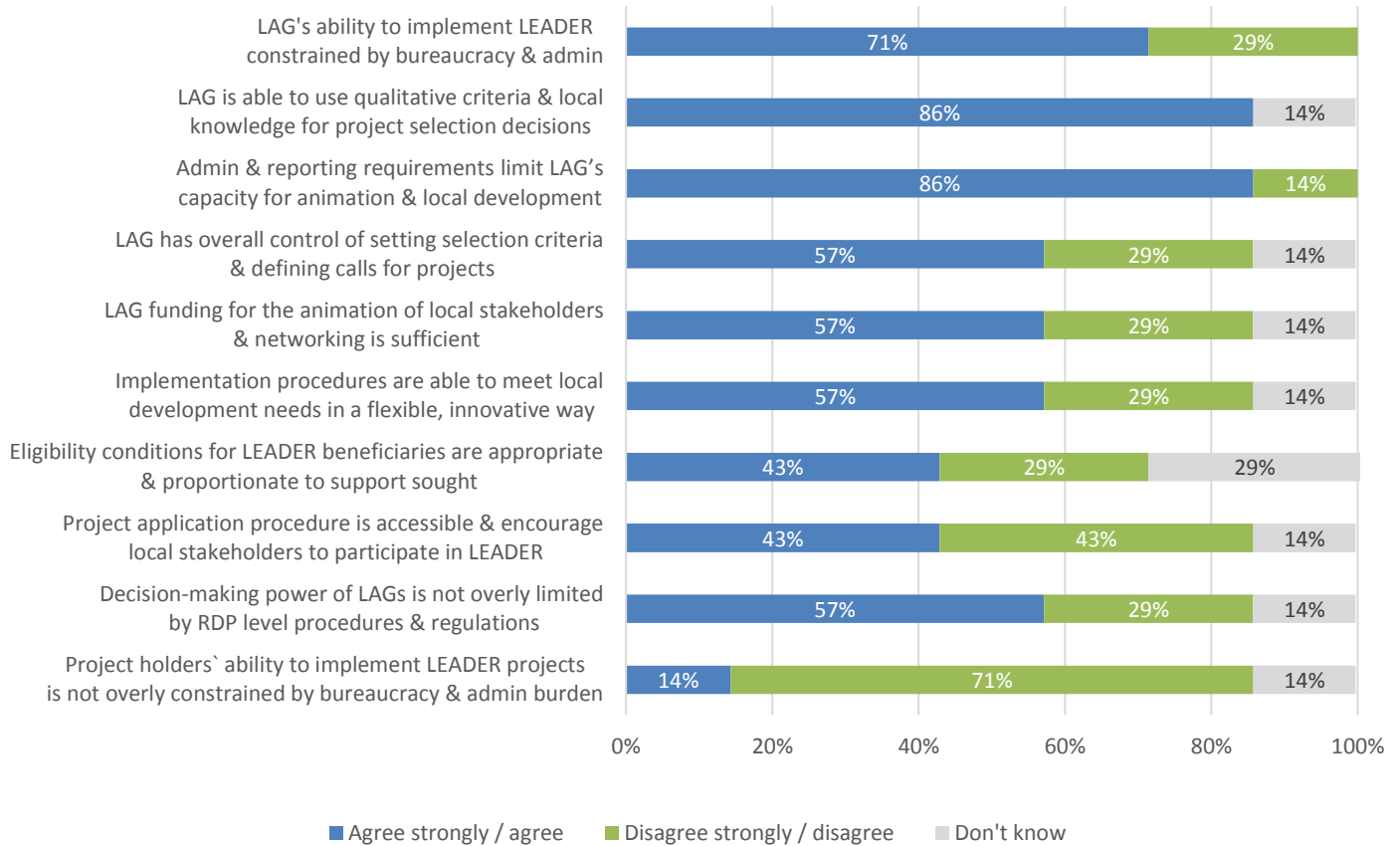
Please consider the statements below and for each statement select the option that best reflects your practical experience from this scale: 1 = disagree strongly, 2 = disagree, 3 = don't know, 4 = agree, 5 = agree strongly.

- LEADER implementation procedures are able to meet local development needs in a flexible, innovative way.
- The project application procedure is designed to be accessible and encourage local stakeholders to participate in LEADER.
- The LAG has overall control of setting selection criteria and defining calls for projects.
- The LAG is able to use qualitative criteria and local knowledge to inform project selection decisions.
- The decision-making power of LAGs is not overly limited by Rural Development Programme (RDP) level procedures and regulations.
- Your LAG's ability to implement the LEADER approach is constrained by bureaucracy and administrative burden.
- Project holders' ability to implement LEADER projects is not overly constrained by the level of bureaucracy and administrative burden.
- Eligibility conditions for LEADER beneficiaries are appropriate and proportionate to the amount of support sought.
- LAG funding for the animation of local stakeholders and networking is sufficient.
- Administrative and reporting requirements limit your LAG's capacity for animation and other development oriented activities.

Total Number of Responses 7



## Aspects of LEADER Implementation as seen by Local Action Groups



- In most questions, the Belgian LAGs were fairly in line with the EU averages. The major variance relates to the question if the 'decision-making power of LAGs is not overly limited by RDP level procedures'. Here 57% of Belgian respondents agreed/strongly as opposed to 29% of the wider sample.
- The Belgian LAGs were also more positive about the 'accessibility of project application procedures encouraging local stakeholders to participate'. Here, only 43% had a negative view as opposed to 61% of the EU sample.

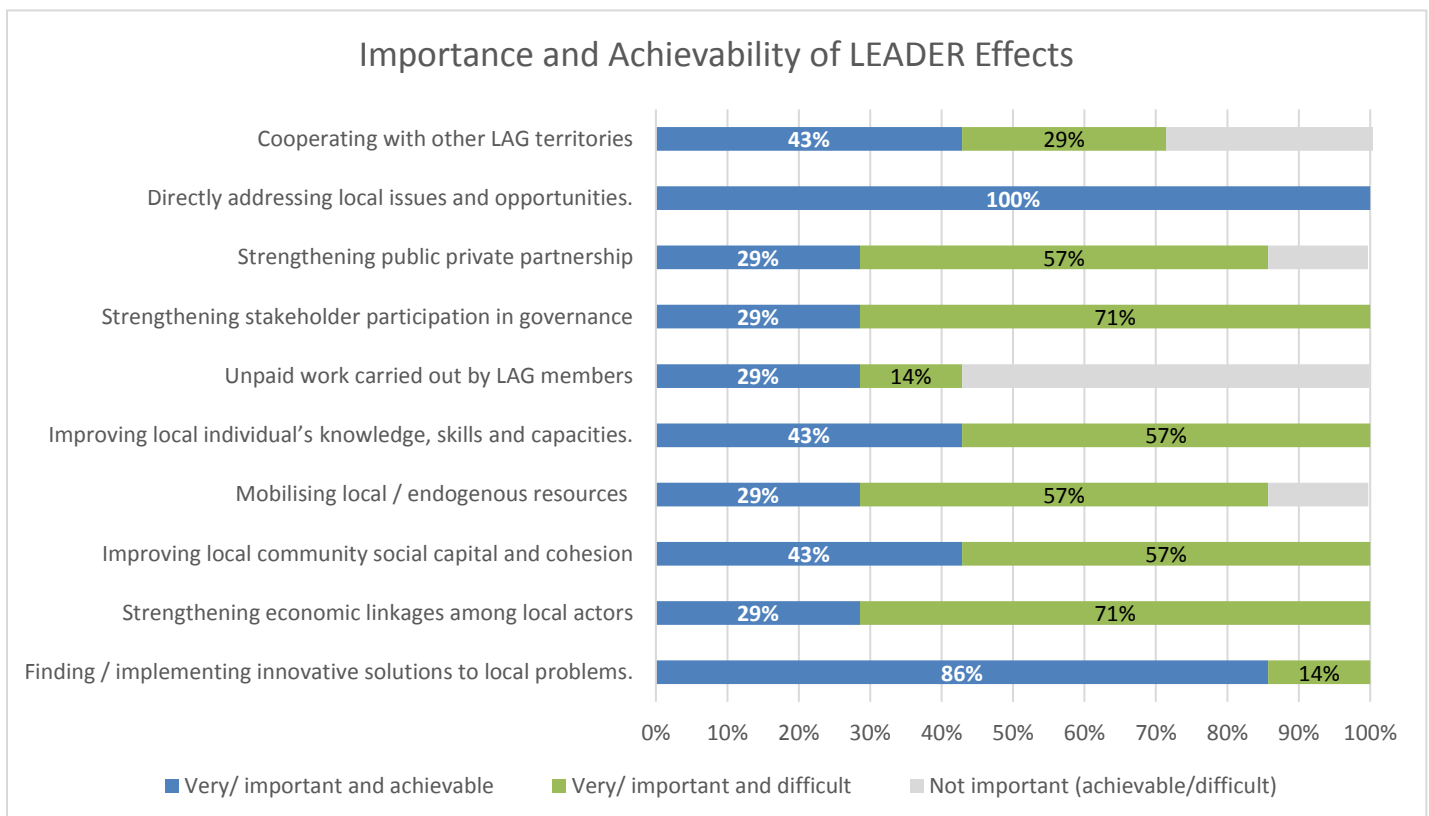
### Question 16

The LEADER approach can deliver qualitative local effects which are distinctive from those of other rural development activities. The importance of these effects and how easy they are to achieve may vary by LAG.

Please rank how important and how achievable each of the possible effects is for your LAG according to the following scale. 1= Very important and achievable, 2 = Very important and difficult, 3 = Important and achievable, 4 = Important and difficult, 5 = Not important but achievable, 6= Not important and difficult.

- Directly addressing local issues and opportunities.
- Strengthening stakeholder participation in local partnership and its governance.
- Strengthening economic linkages among local actors.
- Strengthening public private partnership.
- Unpaid work carried out by LAG members.
- Mobilising local / endogenous resources (human, physical, financial).
- Improving local community social capital and cohesion.
- Improving local individual's knowledge, skills and capacities.
- Finding / implementing innovative solutions to local problems.
- Cooperating with other LAG territories.

Total Number of Responses 7



- In comparison to the EU sample, a considerably smaller proportion of Belgian LAGs stated that the LEADER effects were very/important and achievable across most categories of effect.
- Overall importance ratings were broadly similar between the samples other than ratings of 100% applied to four categories marginally exceeding the overall sample ratings for importance i.e. less than 10% variance.
- The main difference appears to be in lower levels of achievability of these effects with the exception of 'directly addressing local issues and opportunities and 'finding innovative solutions to local problems' (100% for importance and achievability).
- In the case of 'unpaid work by LAG members', proportionately a far smaller proportion of Belgian LAGs felt that this was an important LEADER effect in comparison to their EU peers (43% vs 86%).

## LEADER Operation

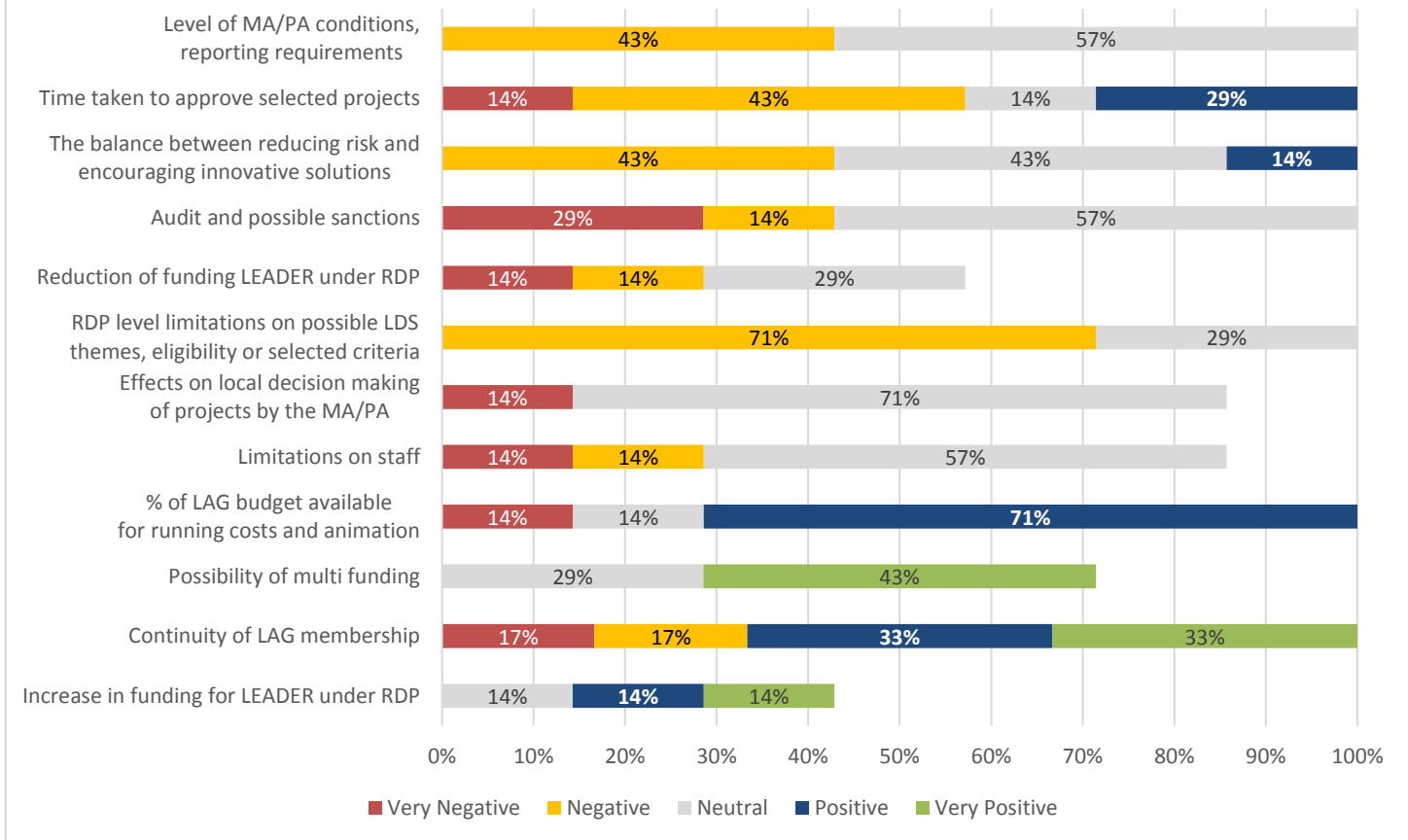
### Question 17

*What level of effect have the following factors had on the implementation of LEADER in your LAG territory? (for each option enter either 0 = not applicable, 1 = very negative, 2 = negative, 3 = neutral, 4 = positive, 5 = very positive)*

- Reduction of funding for LEADER under the RDP.
- Increase in funding for LEADER under the RDP.
- RDP level limitations on possible Local Development Strategy themes, eligibility or selection criteria.
- Level of Managing Authority/Paying Agency conditions, reporting requirements.
- Time taken to approve selected projects.
- Audit and possible sanctions.
- The balance in implementation procedures effects between reducing risk and encouraging innovative solutions.
- Effects on local decision-making of final approval of projects by the managing authority or paying agency.
- Percentage of LAG budget available for running costs and animation.
- Limitations on staff (continuity, skills, number).
- Continuity of LAG membership.
- Possibility of multi funding

*Total Number of Responses 7*

### Level of Effects on LEADER Implementation



For the purposes of improving the clarity of the analysis the ‘not applicable’ responses have been removed from the chart.

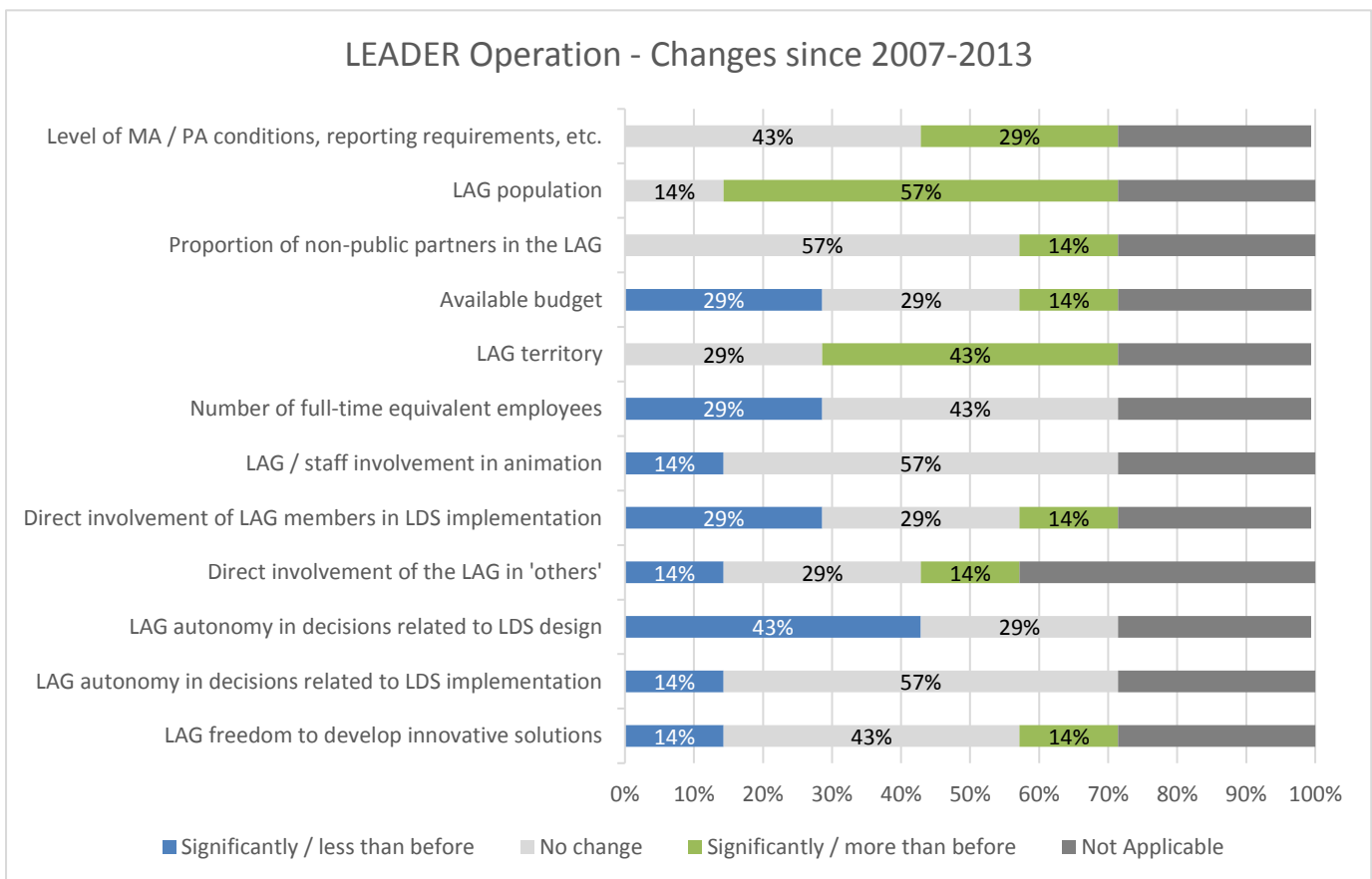
- For most factors LAGs in Belgium were less negative in their responses than their EU counterparts, even for the most negatively ranked factors in Belgium. They were notably less negative regarding the ‘level of MA/PA conditions, reporting requirements’ with no very negative rankings vs 38% very negative in the wider sample.
- They were similarly much less negative regarding the ‘balance between reducing risk and encouraging innovative solutions’ with no very negative rankings vs 34% in the wider sample and for the ‘allocation of funding under the RDP’ (28% very/negative vs 55%).
- Belgian LAGs were more positive than about the effects of ‘% of LAG budget available for running costs and animation’ (71% vs 32%) and ‘continuity of LAG membership’ (66% vs 32%).
- A larger percentage of Belgian LAGs expressed a neutral position with regard to these effects, this is most evident in ‘reporting requirements’ (57% vs 20%), ‘effects on local decision making by the MA/PA’ (71% vs 38% at EU level), ‘audit and possible sanctions’ (57% vs 31%), ‘limitations on staff’ (57% vs 38%).

### Question 18

How have the following aspects changed for your LAG between the 2007 – 2013 and 2014-2020 Programming periods? (1 = significantly less than before, 2 = less than before, 3 = no change, 4 = more than before, 5 = significantly more than before) (routed for only those LAGs previously operational)

- Available budget.
- LAG territory.
- LAG population.
- Number of full-time equivalent employees.
- LAG / staff involvement in animation.
- LAG autonomy in decisions related to local development strategy design.
- LAG autonomy in decisions related to local development strategy implementation.
- Level of MA controls, reporting requirements etc.
- LAG freedom to develop innovative solutions.
- Proportion of non-public partners in the LAG.
- Direct involvement of LAG members in LDS implementation.
- Direct involvement of the LAG in other regional and territorial development actions or structures.

Total Number of Responses 7



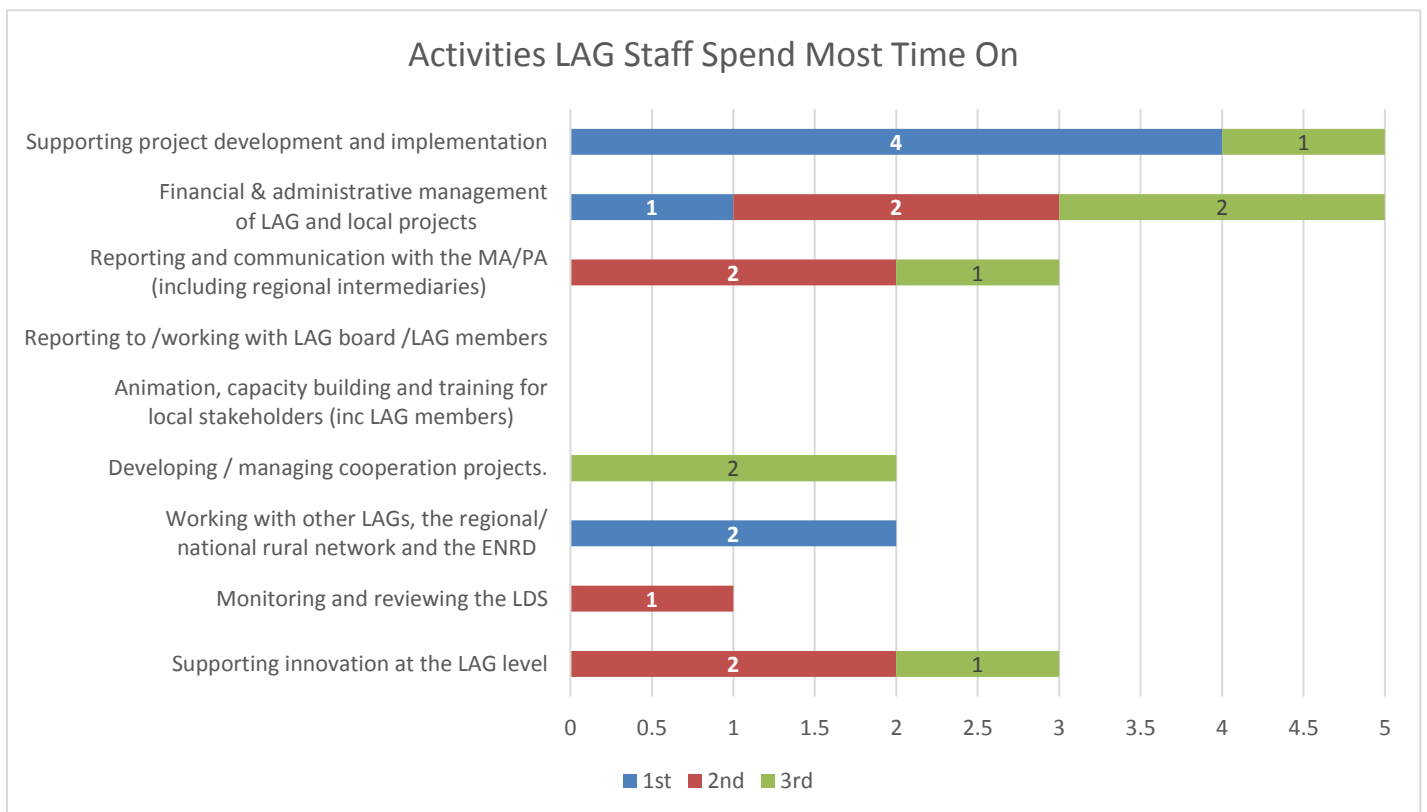
- Relatively more Belgian LAGs experienced 'no change' or felt that the question was 'not applicable' in comparison to other EU LAGs.
- Proportionately more Belgian respondents indicated that they experienced reductions in the areas of 'LAG autonomy in decisions related to LDS design' (43% vs 23%) and 'direct involvement of LAG members in LDS implementation' (29% vs 8%).
- A greater than average proportion of Belgian LAGs report increases in LAG territory (43% vs 27%) and LAG population (57% vs 34%).

### Question 19

Please think about your day-to-day work in the LAG and rank the three types of activity which your LAG staff spend most time on overall on a scale of 1 – 3 where 1 = most time spent.

- Reporting to /working with LAG board and members.
- Supporting project development and implementation.
- Financial and administrative management of LAG and local projects.
- Reporting and communication with the Managing Authority and Paying Agency (including regional intermediaries).
- Animation, capacity building and training of local stakeholders (inc LAG members).
- Supporting innovation at the local level.
- Monitoring and reviewing the local development strategy.
- Developing /managing cooperation projects.
- Working with other LAGs, the regional/national rural network and the ENRD.

Total Number of Responses 7



- There were no major differences between Belgian LAGs and the overall EU sample regarding the three most prioritised activities for time spent by LAG staff ('finance and administrative management', 'supporting project development', and 'reporting and communication with MA/PA').



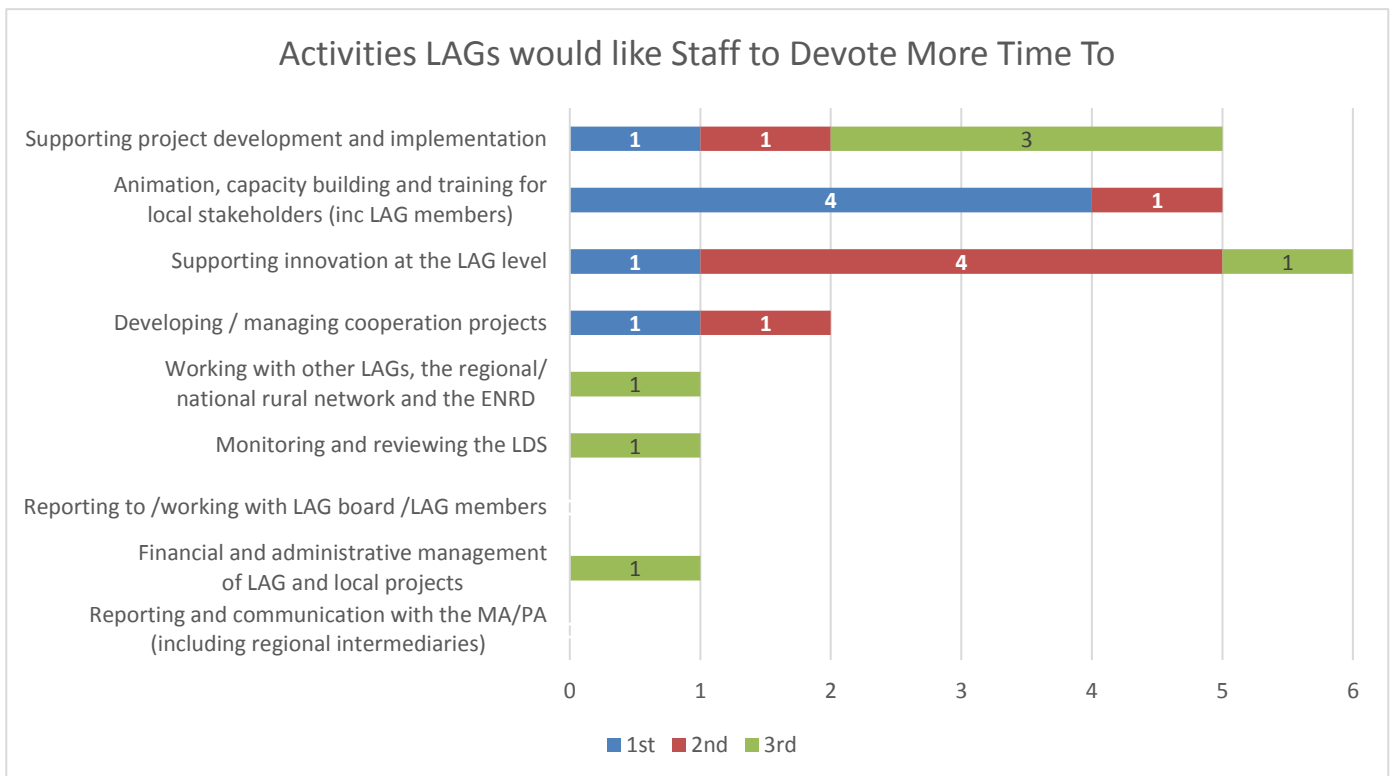
- A greater proportion of responding Belgian LAGs report that they spend time on 'supporting innovation at the LAG level' than in the wider sample.
- They have not ranked two activities at all in their top three ('animation, capacity building and training for local stakeholders' and 'reporting to and working with LAG board / LAG members'), in contrast to the EU sample.

## Question 20

Where would you like to be able to devote more of your LAG team's time or resources in order to maximise the benefit of LEADER to your LAG territory? Please rank the three most important options below on a scale of 1 – 3 where 1 = most important.

- Reporting to /working with LAG board /LAG members.
- Supporting project development and implementation.
- Financial and administrative management of LAG and local projects.
- Reporting and communication with the Managing Authority and Paying Agency (including regional intermediaries).
- Animation, capacity building and training of local stakeholders (inc LAG members).
- Supporting innovation at the local level.
- Monitoring and reviewing the local development strategy.
- Developing /managing cooperation projects.
- Working with other LAGs, the regional/national rural network and the ENRD.

Total Number of Responses 7



- The top three activities which Belgian respondents prioritised are line with the EU sample however the order of priority is reversed within this as follows:
  - Supporting innovation at LAG level.
  - Animation, capacity building and training for local stakeholders.
  - Supporting project development and implementation.

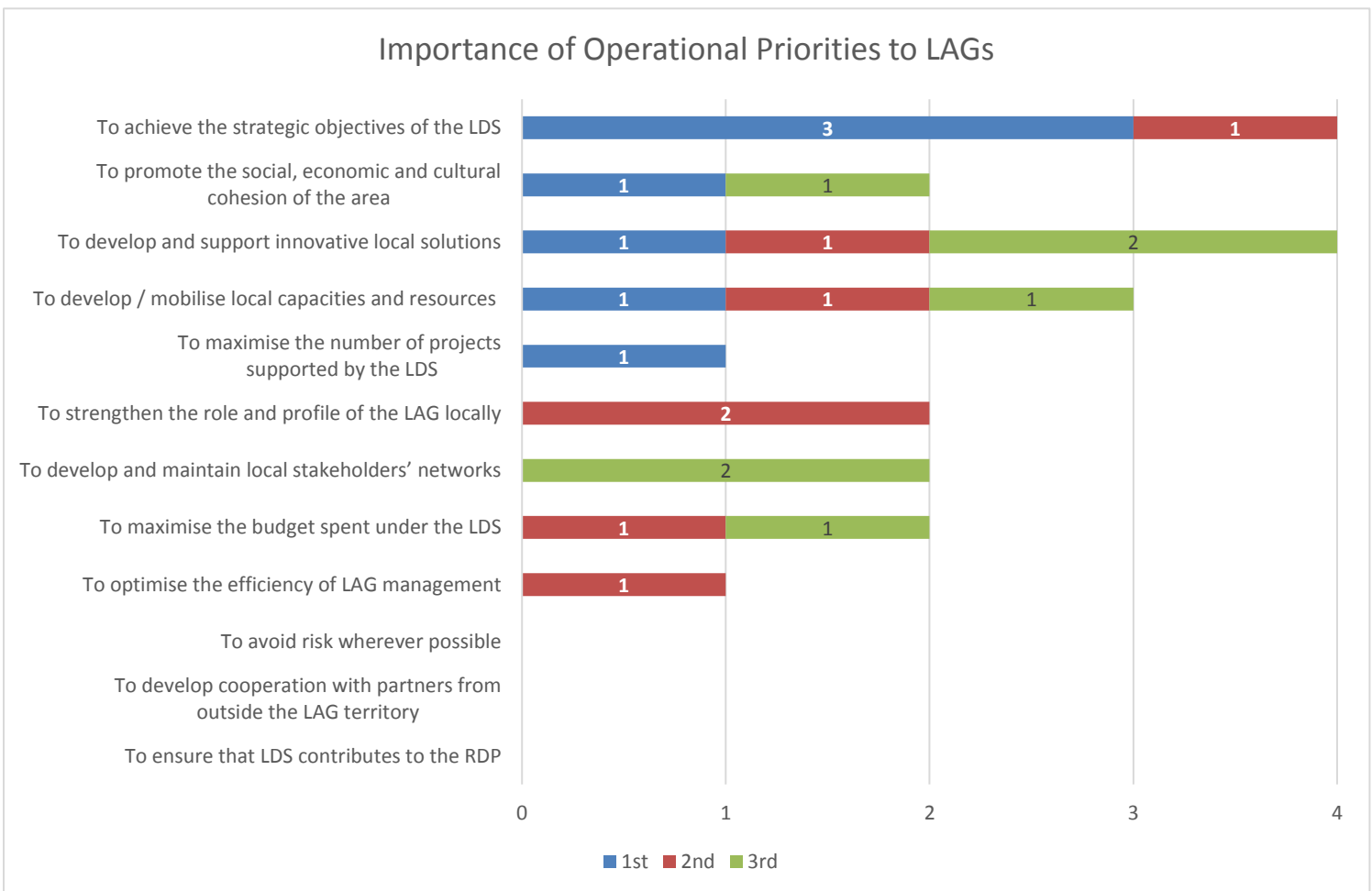
### Question 21

How important are the following operational priorities to your LAG? Please select your top 3 most important options below in order of importance on a scale of 1 – 3 where 1 = most important.

- To achieve the strategic objectives of the local development strategy (LDS).
- To maximise the number of projects supported by the LDS.
- To maximise the budget spent under the LDS.
- To ensure that LDS contributes to the RDP.
- To optimise the efficiency of LAG management.
- To strengthen the role and profile of the LAG locally.
- To promote the social, economic and cultural cohesion of the area.
- To develop and support innovative local solutions.
- To avoid risk wherever possible.
- To develop and maintain local stakeholders' networks.
- To develop cooperation with partners from outside the LAG territory.
- To develop / mobilise local capacities and resources (human, funding, knowledge, etc.)

Total Number of Responses 7

### Importance of Operational Priorities to LAGs



- The ranking of operational priorities for Belgium is similar to that for the EU sample as a whole other than a stronger ranking being placed on innovative solutions (second most important operational priority in Belgium, but third at EU level) and a higher ranking for the development and mobilisation of local capacities (3<sup>rd</sup> vs 4<sup>th</sup> most important ranking in EU).

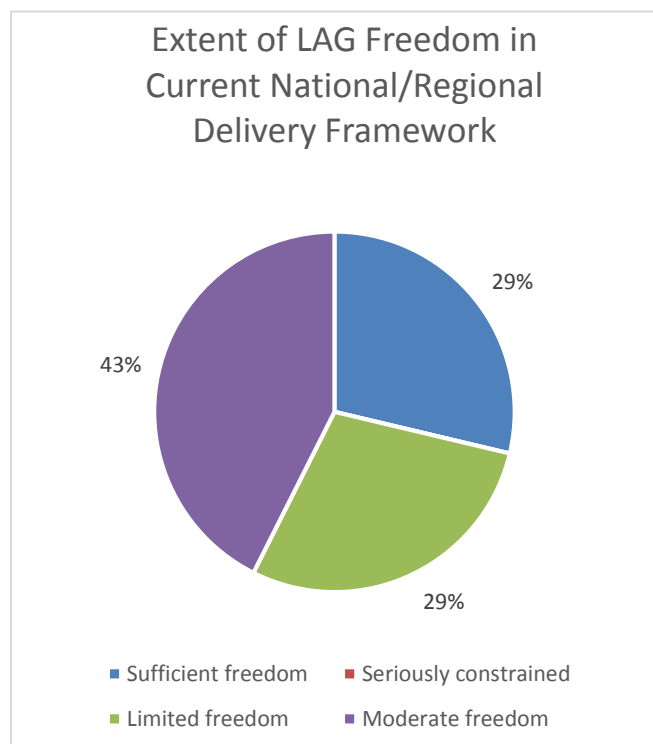
## Question 22

To what extent does your national or regional LEADER delivery framework enable your LAG to pursue these operational priorities? Please select the option most appropriate to your LAG.

- The LAG has sufficient freedom to allow it to pursue its preferred priorities.
- The LAG has a moderate degree of freedom which allows it to partially address its priorities.
- The LAG has a limited degree of freedom which substantially compromises its freedom to address its priorities.
- The LAGs freedom to address its operational priorities is seriously constrained

Total Number of Responses 7

- Belgian LAGs had fairly similar experiences to their EU peers regarding LAG freedom. However, they were a little more positive than the EU sample (29% vs 17% felt that they had 'sufficient freedom')
- None of the Belgian LAGs felt that they had 'serious constraints', whereas 11% of the EU sample stated this.

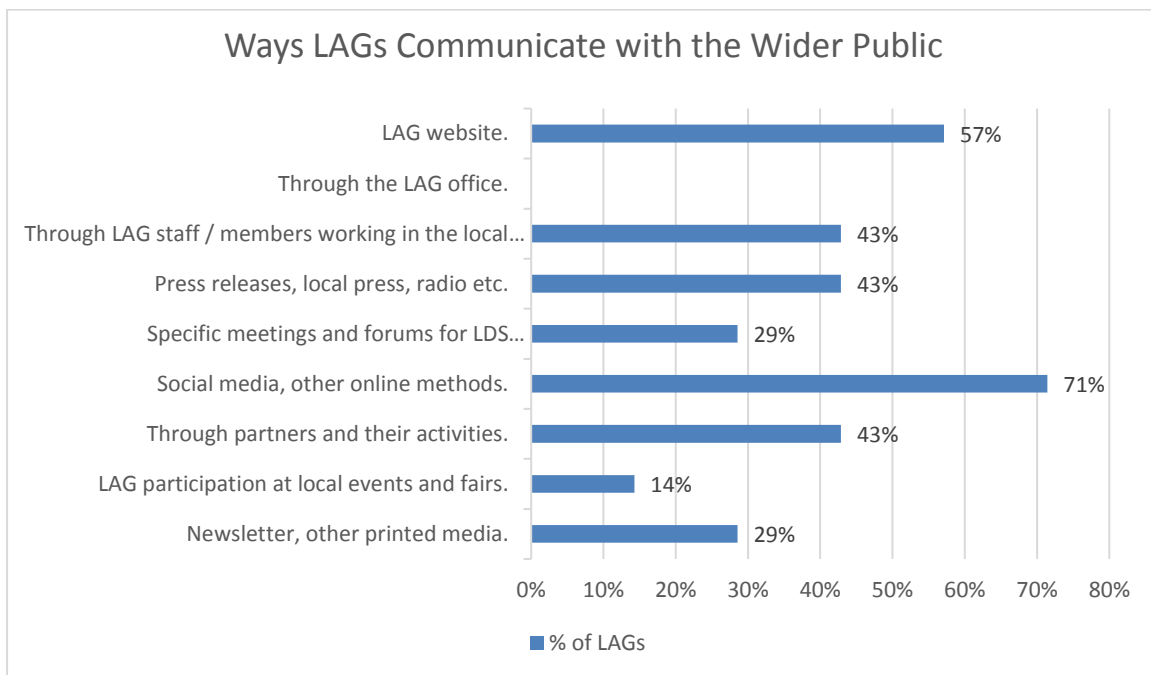


### Question 23

What is the main way your LAG communicates with the wider public in your LAG Territory (including potential beneficiaries)? Please select those methods which your LAG uses.

- LAG website.
- Specific meetings and forums for LDS implementation.
- Through the LAG office.
- Through LAG staff / members working in the local community.
- LAG participation at local events and fairs.
- Press releases, local press, radio etc.
- Newsletter, other printed media.
- Social media, other online methods.
- Through partners and their activities.

Total Number of Responses 38



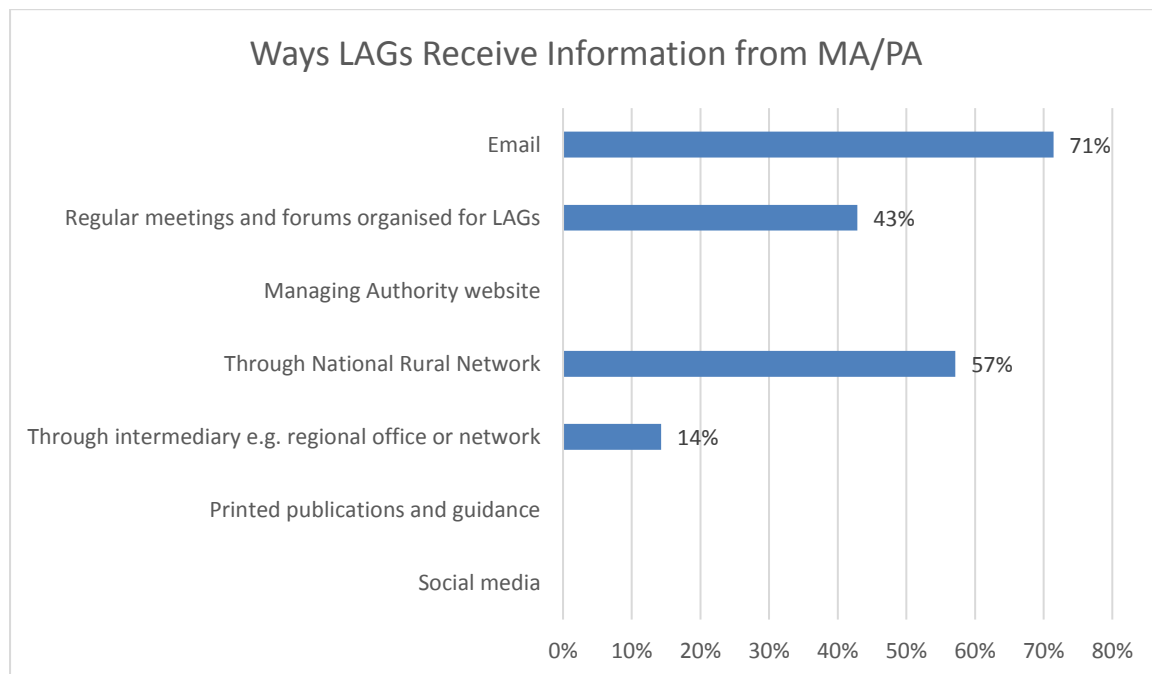
- Belgian LAGs appear to use social media more than the overall EU sample (71% vs 61%).
- Overall, however, Belgian LAGs identified a less varied range of communication than the EU sample mostly showing smaller percentages across all types of communication (except social media).
- None of the Belgian LAGs used their LAG office as one of their main ways for communicating (in contrast to 71% of the EU sample), participation of 'LAG staff and members working in the local community', in 'local events and fairs' and 'specific meetings and forums for LDS implementation' was notably less frequent also.

### Question 24

What are the main ways in which you receive information from the Managing Authority? Please select those methods which are most used

- Managing Authority website.
- Regular meetings and forums organised for LAGs.
- Through National Rural Network.
- Social media.
- Printed publications and guidance.
- Email.
- Through intermediary e.g. regional office or network.

Total Number of Responses 7



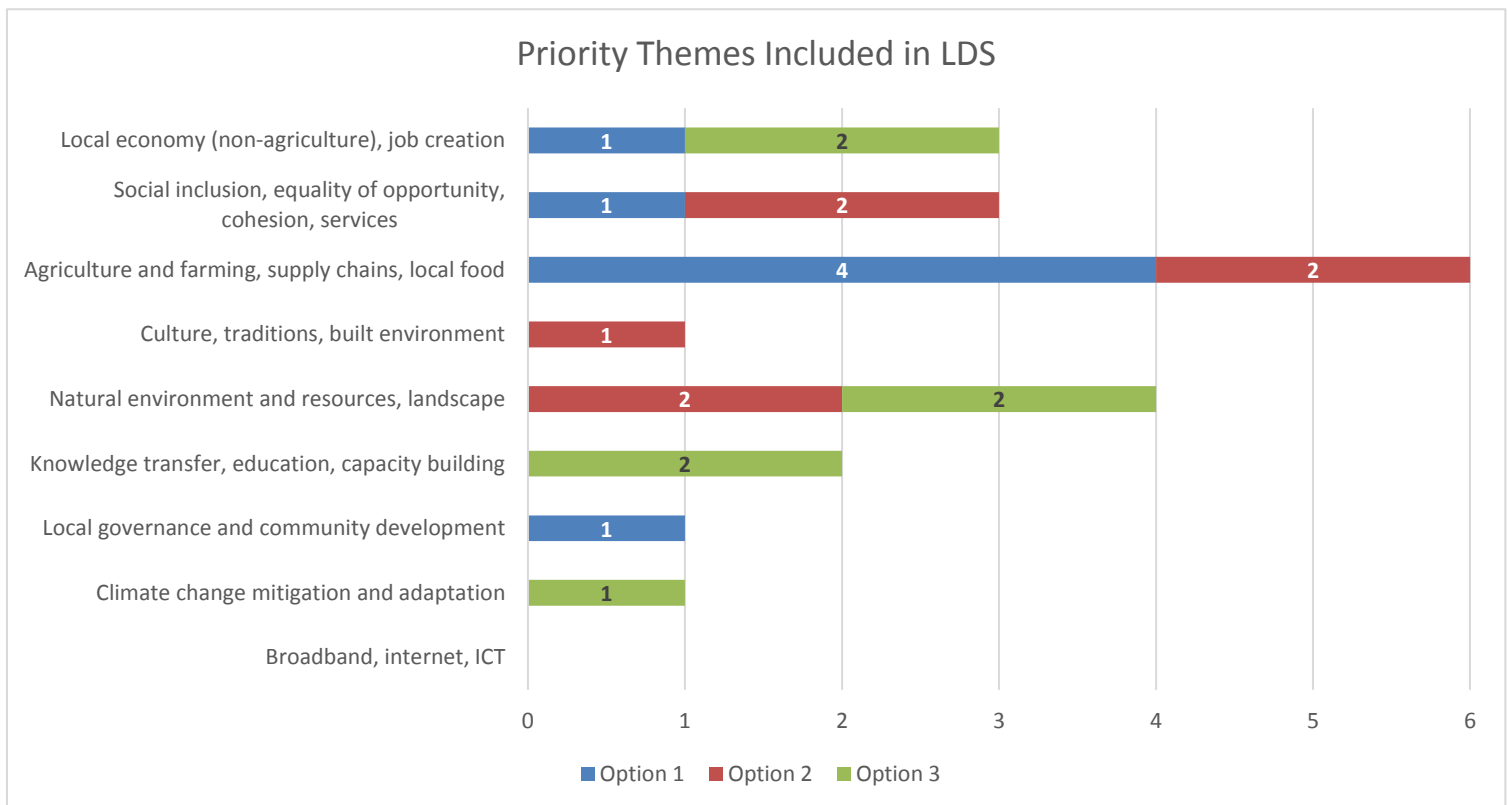
- The main way Belgian LAGs (71%) indicated that they receive their communication from the Managing Authority via 'email'. In comparison, 90% of the EU sample report this way of receiving information.
- In Belgium it appears that there is greater involvement of the NRN in communicating information than elsewhere in the EU (57% vs 31%).
- LAGs do not seem to receive information through the Managing Authority's website, whereas a third (34%) of the other EU LAGs access information in this manner. Printed material and social media also receive no mention.

### Question 25

Which of the following priority themes relate most closely to your Local Development Strategy objectives? Please select (up to) the three most relevant ones from the options provided.

- Knowledge transfer, education, capacity building.
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Agriculture and farming, supply chains, local food.
- Local economy (non-agriculture), job creation.
- Culture, traditions, built environment.
- Natural environment and resources, landscape.
- Social inclusion, equality of opportunity, cohesion, services.
- Local governance and community development.
- Broadband, internet, ICT.

Total Number of Responses 7



- Belgian LAGs identify ‘agriculture and farming, supply chains, local food’ and the ‘natural environment and resources’ as their most relevant strategic themes with the former of these clearly the priority. At EU level, these two themes feature as third and fifth most identified options.



- Belgian LAGs identified 'social inclusion' and the 'local economy' as their third and fourth most frequently included LDS themes. At EU level, these featured as first and second highest priority themes.

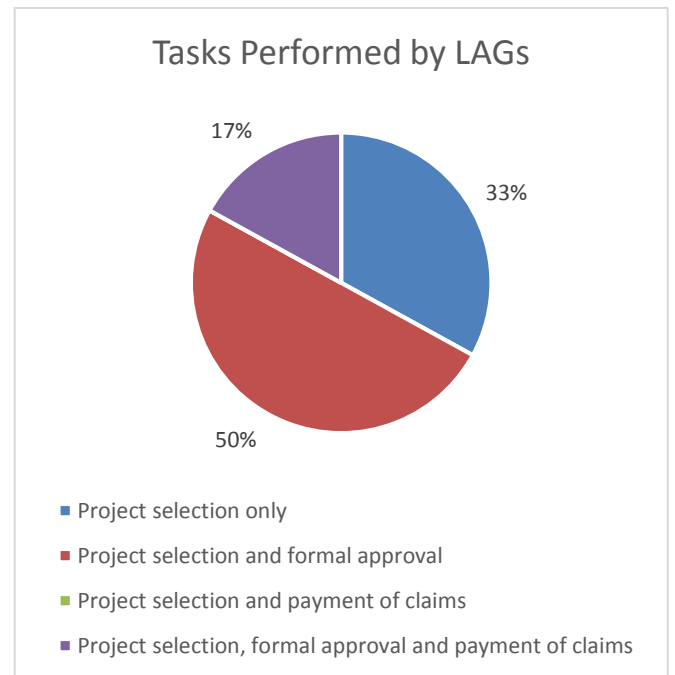
## Question 26

What tasks does your LAG perform in relation to LEADER projects as part of your LDS implementation?  
Please select one of the options.

- Project selection only
- Project selection and formal approval
- Project selection and payment of claims
- Project selection, formal approval and payment of claims

### Total Number of Responses 6

- In comparison to the EU sample, proportionately more Belgian LAGs indicated they are responsible for 'project selection and formal approval' (50% vs 31% at EU level).
- Their proportion undertaking 'project selection, formal approval and administering payments' was similar to EU level (17% vs 19%).
- Consequently, a smaller proportion of Belgian LAGs undertook 'project selection only' (33% vs 48%).



## LEADER Improvements

### Question 27

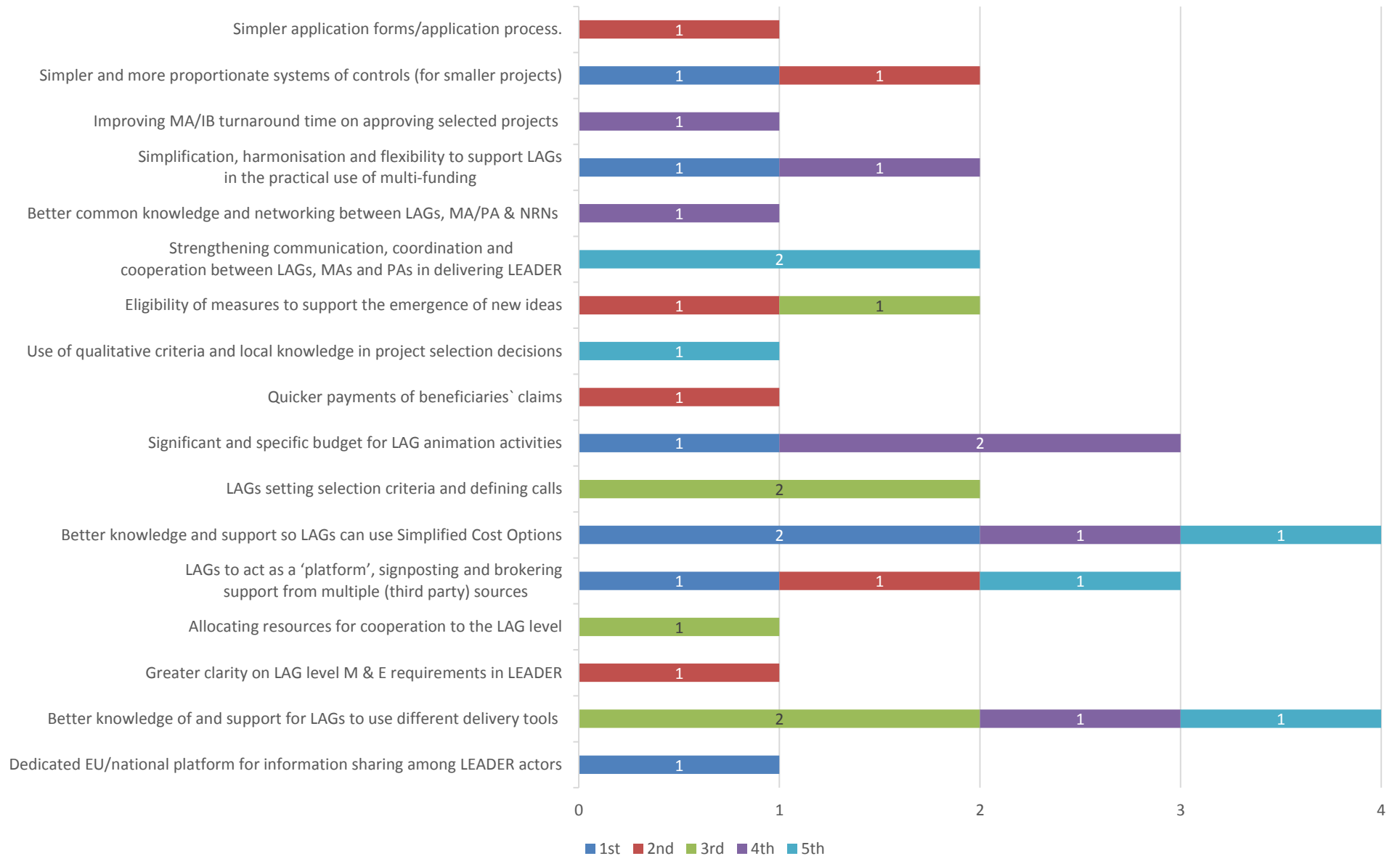
*What is most important to address in helping LAGs to be effective in implementing LEADER now? Please select and rank your top five priorities from the following items in order of their importance in (where 1= highest importance and 5 = 5th most important)*

- Better common knowledge and support through networking of LAGs, Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies and National Rural Networks and exchanges on transferable experience and practices
- The eligibility of measures to support the emergence of new ideas, e.g. the use of feasibility studies, LAG led projects, pilot projects, preparatory work etc. should be ensured from the EU level down.
- Setting aside a significant and specific budget for LAG animation activities.
- Allocating resources for cooperation to the LAG level.
- Ensuring better common knowledge of and support for LAGs to take advantage of using simplified cost options.
- LAGs setting selection criteria and defining calls
- LAGs using qualitative criteria and local knowledge to inform project selection decisions.
- Ensuring better common knowledge of and support for LAGs to take advantage of using different delivery tools e.g. 'Umbrella projects'.
- Improving MA or intermediary body turnaround time on approving selected projects.
- Improving timeliness of payments of beneficiaries' claims.
- Simpler and more proportionate systems of controls (for smaller projects?).
- Simplification, harmonisation and flexibility to support LAGs in the practical use of multi-funding.
- Greater clarity on LAG level monitoring and evaluation (M&E) requirements in LEADER.
- Strengthening communication, coordination and cooperation between LAGs, Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies in delivering LEADER.
- A dedicated EU/national platform for information sharing among LEADER actors.
- Simpler application forms/application process.
- Allowing LAGs to act as a 'platform', signposting and brokering support from multiple (third party) sources to further LDS objectives.

### *Total Number of Responses 7*

- The top priority changes sought by the Belgian LAGs varied considerably from those of the wider sample. The three most often desired changes identified, 'better knowledge and support so LAGs can use simplified cost options', 'better knowledge and support for LAGs to use different delivery tools' and 'LAGs acting as platforms' rank much lower priorities for the EU sample (12<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> most often identified).

## Most Important Changes to Improve Implementation Now

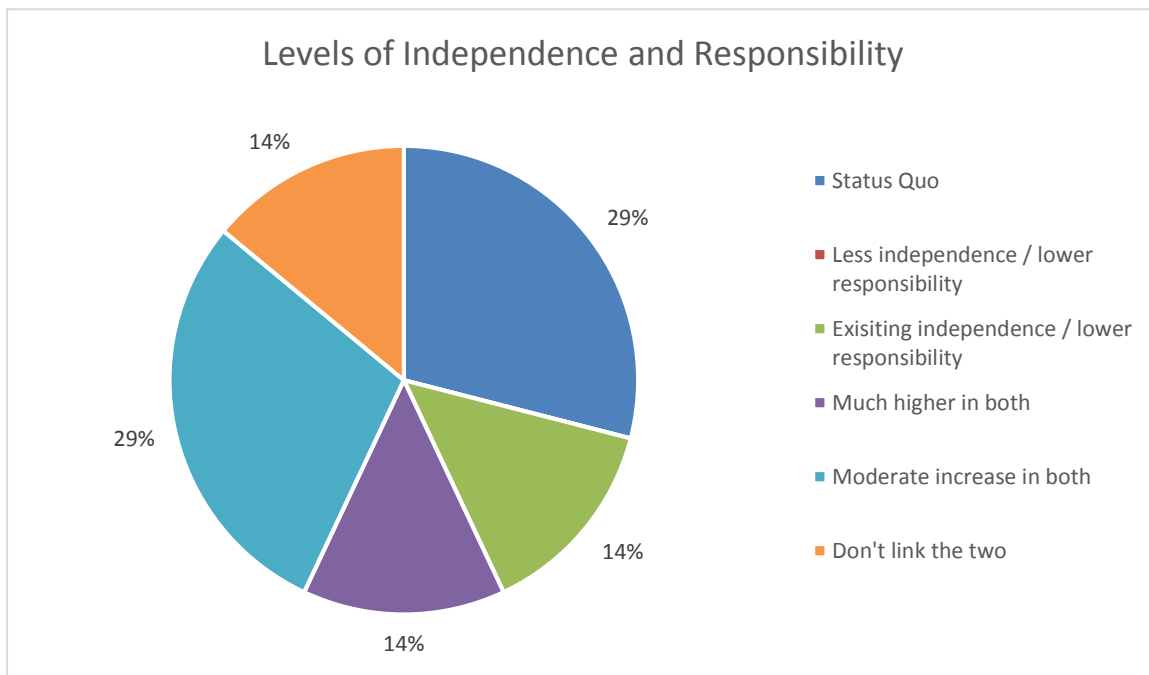


### Question 28:

*Some LAGs desire greater independence in their operations with more power and responsibility e.g. in project selection and approvals, project management, use of funds, managing risk etc. Which one of these statements best reflects your LAG's position?*

- We are happy with the existing levels of responsibility, independence and accountability
- We prefer less independence with a lower level of direct LAG responsibility and financial accountability
- We prefer the existing level of independence with a lower level of direct LAG responsibility and financial accountability
- We prefer a much higher degree of independence and would be happy with a significantly higher degree of direct responsibility and financial accountability
- We prefer a moderate increase in independence with a moderate increase in direct responsibility and financial accountability
- Any increase in independence should not be linked to increased LAG responsibilities and accountability

Total number of responses – 7



- In line with the EU sample, many Belgian LAGs (29% vs 28%) preferred to see a 'moderate increase' in their independence and responsibility with 43% (EU 47%) being in favour of some degree of increased responsibility.

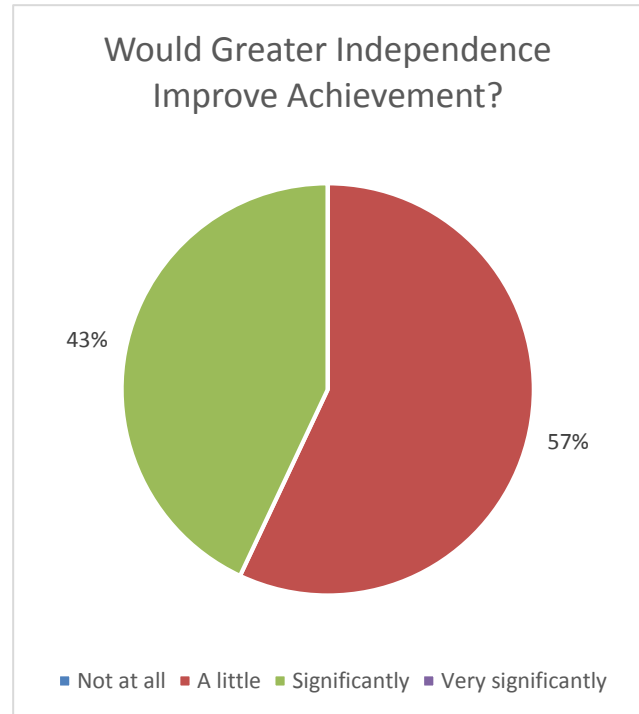
### Question 29

To what extent would greater independence, power and responsibility for your LAGs improve what you are able to achieve? Please select one option.

- Not at all
- A little
- Significantly
- Very significantly

Total Number of Responses 7

- All the Belgian LAGs indicate that greater responsibility would improve achievement.
- While 43% of LAGs in Belgium felt that more independence would lead to 'significant' improvements (in line with the EU average of 42%).
- No Belgian respondents expressed 'not at all', or 'very significantly', 24% of the EU sample had these stronger views.

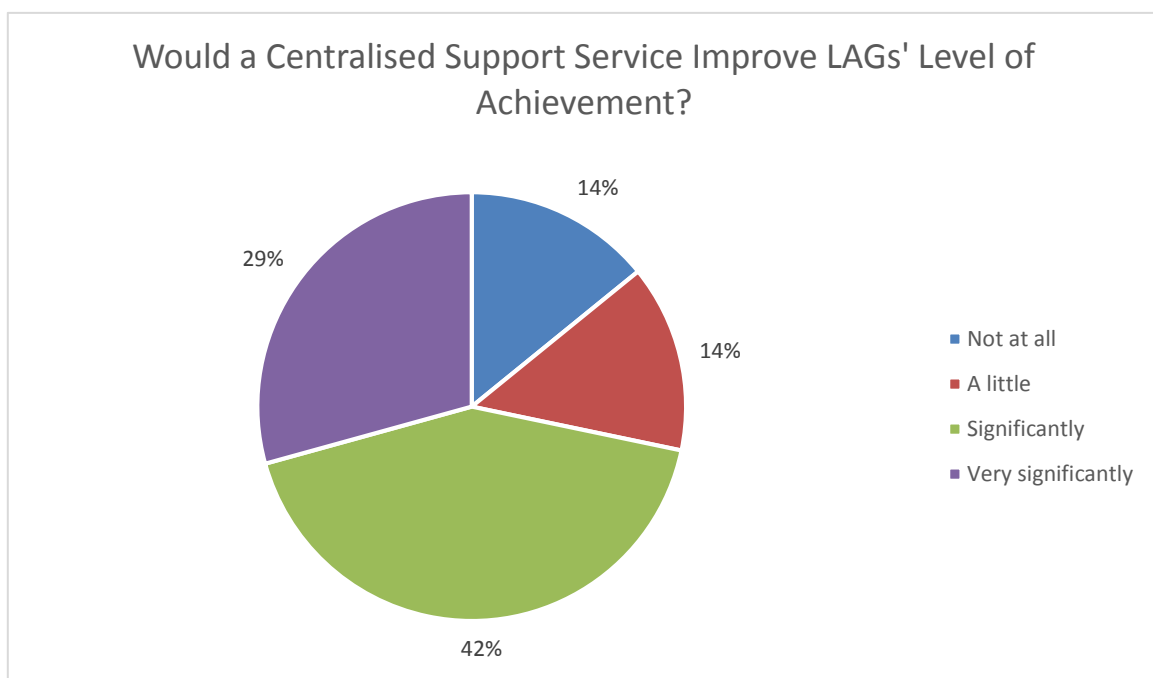


### Question 30

*If it was possible to reduce LAG administration through the provision of a centralised support service (e.g. shared and managed by multiple LAGs) to what extent would that improve your LAGs level of achievement?*

- Not at all
- A little %
- Significantly
- Very significantly

Total Number of Responses 7



- Belgian LAGs were much more strongly positive than the total EU sample that a centralised support service would improve their achievements 'significantly' or 'very significantly' (71% vs 37%).
- Considerably fewer Belgian respondents considered that there would be 'no improvement at all' (14% vs 36%).

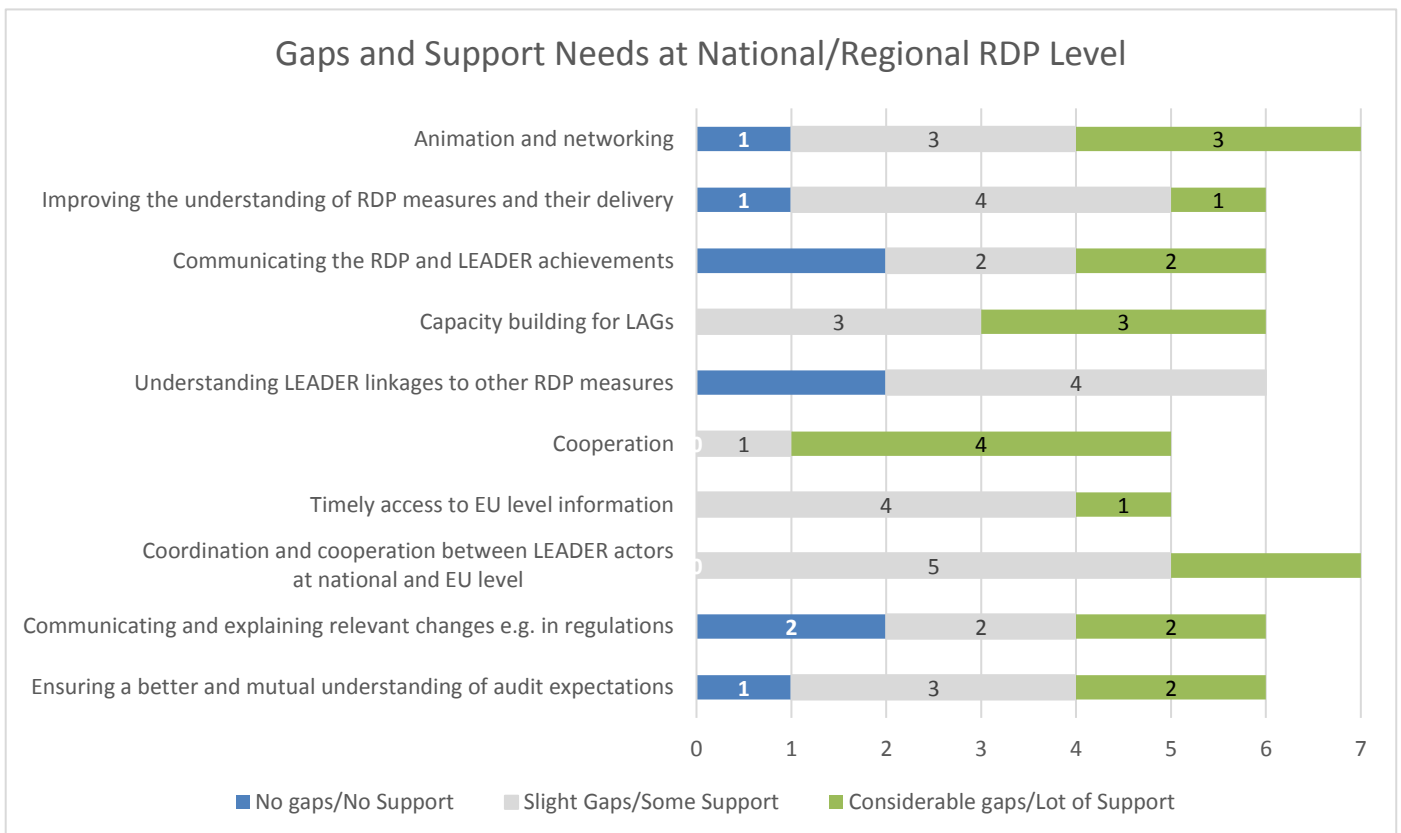
### Question 31

To what extent does support from national and regional Rural Development Programme authorities (e.g. Managing Authority, Paying Agency) meet LAG needs and enhance LEADER implementation? Please, use the following scale to rank the provision against the specified needs:

- 1= no gaps in support – no support needed,
- 2 = slight gaps – some support needed,
- 3 = considerable gaps – lot of support needed.

- Improving the understanding of RDP measures and their delivery.
- Communicating the RDP and LEADER achievements.
- Understanding LEADER linkages to other RDP measures.
- Capacity building for LAGs.
- Animation and networking.
- Cooperation.
- Timely access to EU level information.
- Coordination and cooperation between LEADER actors at national and EU level.
- Communicating and explaining relevant changes e.g. in regulations.
- Ensuring a better and mutual understanding of audit expectations.

Total Number of Responses 7





- The main gaps and support needs identified by Belgian LAGs related to ‘cooperation’, ‘animation and networking’, and ‘capacity building for LAGs’. These were less prevalent in the EU sample, where a greater proportion of respondents identified considerable gaps in the ‘understanding of audit expectations’, ‘communicating relevant changes in regulations’ and ‘coordination and cooperation between LEADER actors’.

### Question 32

To what extent does support from national and regional Rural Networks meet LAG needs and enhance LEADER implementation? Please, use the following scale to rank the provision against the specified needs:

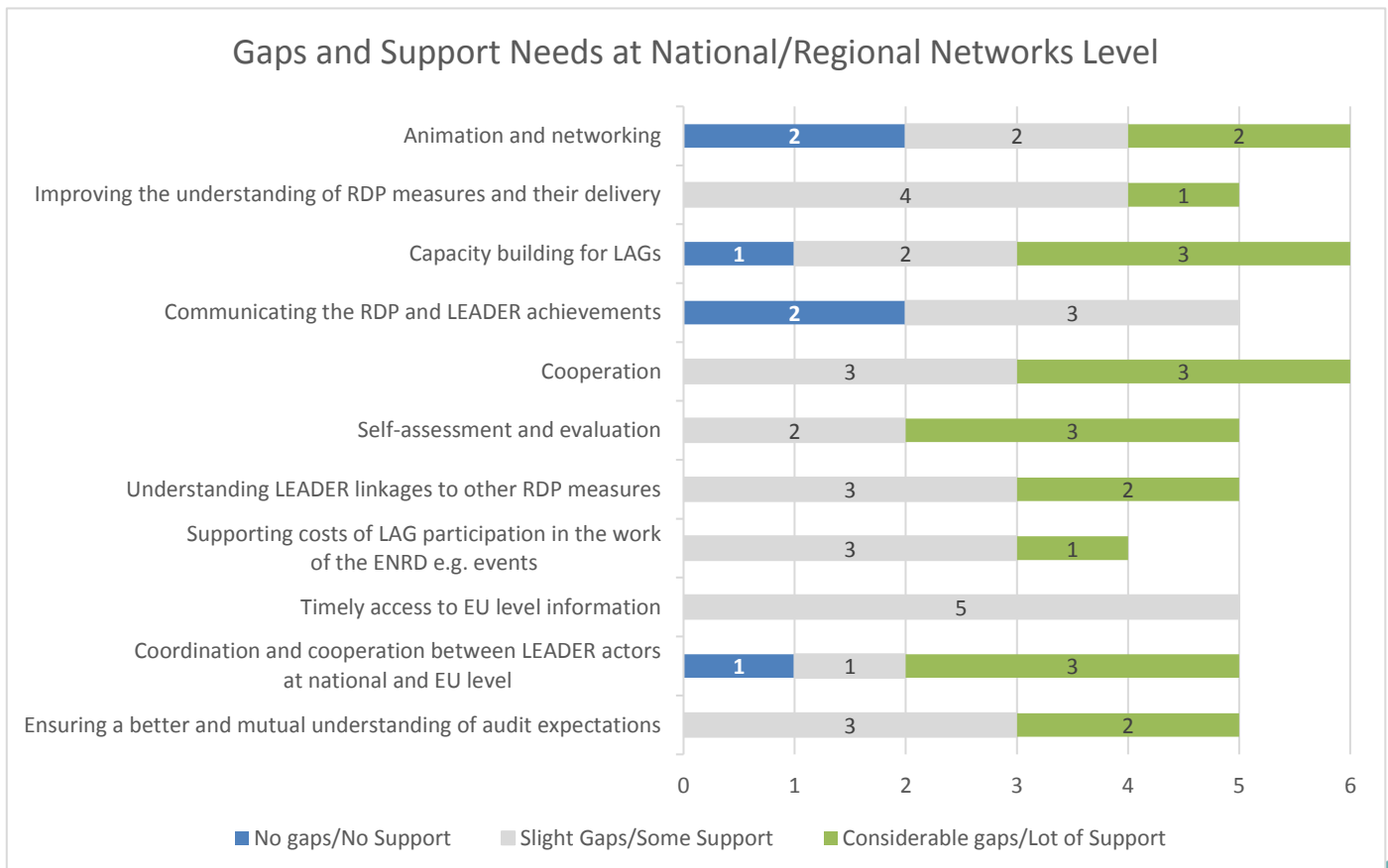
1= no gaps in support – no support needed,

2 = slight gaps – some support needed,

3 = considerable gaps – lot of support needed.

- Improving the understanding of RDP measures and their delivery.
- Self-assessment and evaluation.
- Communicating the RDP and LEADER achievements.
- Understanding LEADER linkages to other RDP measures, e.g. EIP Operational Groups.
- Capacity building for LAGs.
- Animation and networking.
- Cooperation.
- Timely access to EU level information.
- Supporting costs of LAG participation in the work of the ENRD e.g. events
- Coordination and cooperation between LEADER actors at national and EU level.
- Ensuring a better and mutual understanding of audit expectations.

Total Number of Responses 6



- The Belgian respondents identified more considerable gaps and support needs with regard to the areas of 'co-operation', 'self-assessment and evaluation' and 'capacity building for LAGs' than did the total sample.

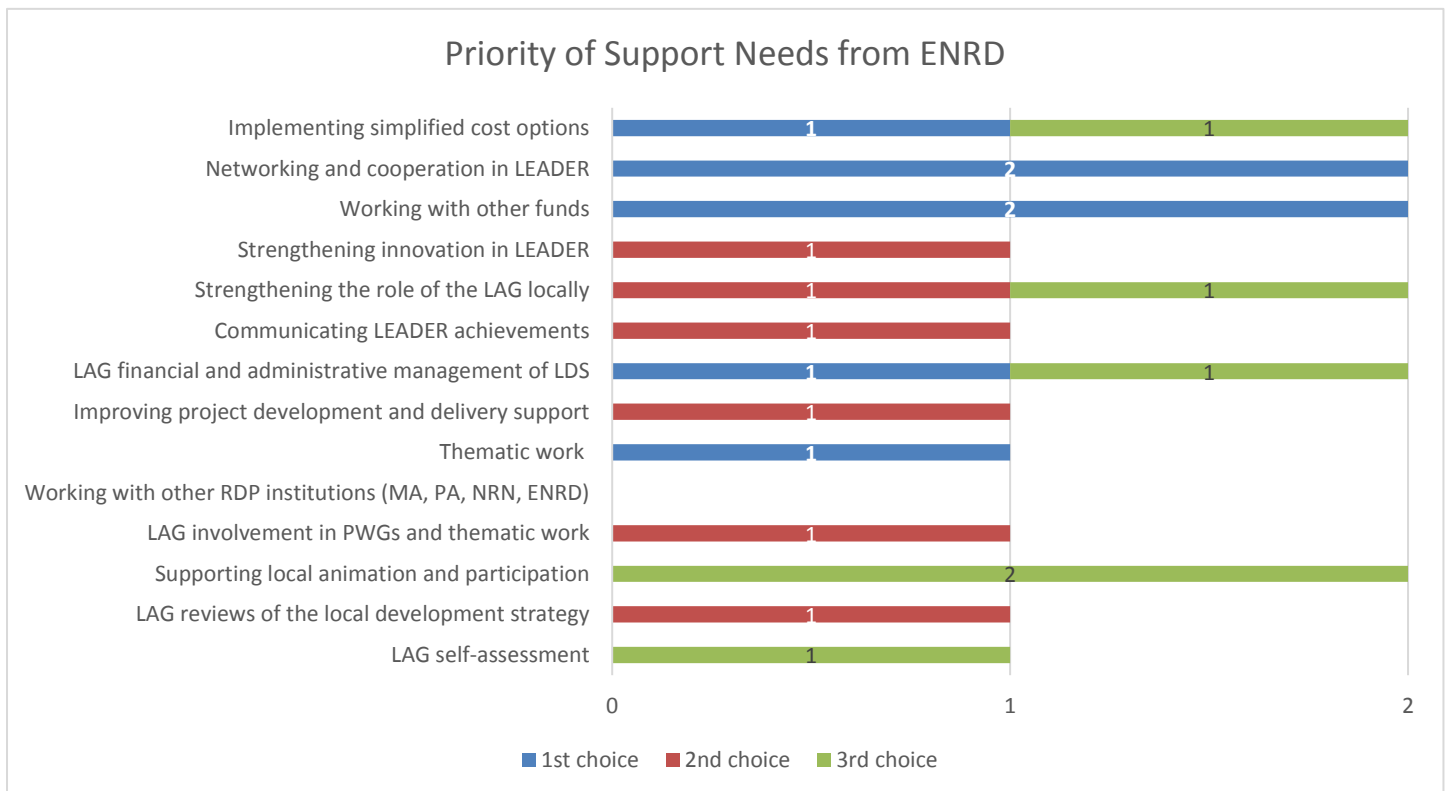
### Question 33

Which of the following areas of your LAG's activity are the priorities which the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) should work on to help your LAG most?

Please rank the three most important options below on a scale of 1 – 3 where 1 = most important.

- LAG reviews of the local development strategy.
- LAG financial and administrative management of local development strategy implementation.
- Improving project development and delivery support.
- Implementing simplified cost options.
- Networking and cooperation in LEADER.
- Communicating LEADER achievements.
- Strengthening innovation in LEADER.
- Strengthening the role of the LAG locally.
- Supporting local animation and participation.
- Thematic work (e.g. Greening the local economy, social innovation, ICT & broadband, smart villages, etc.).
- Working with other RDP institutions (MA, PA, NRN, ENRD).
- LAG self-assessment.
- Working with other funds.
- LAG involvement in practitioner-working groups and thematic work.

Total Number of Responses 7



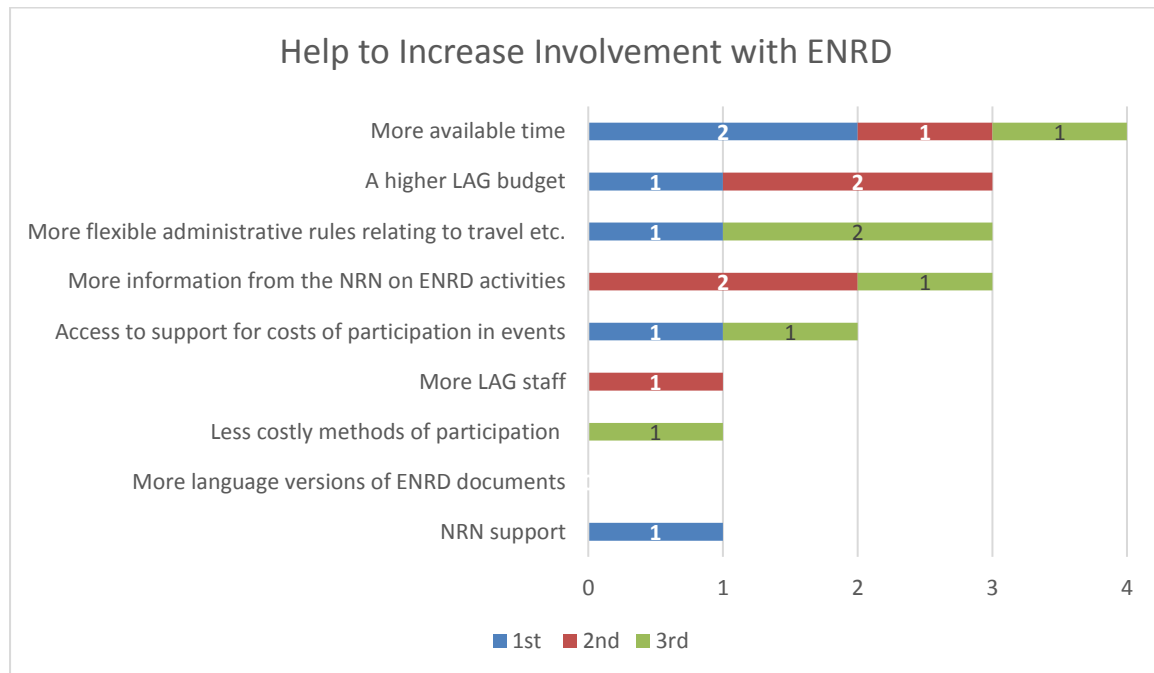
- There were no significant differences evident between Belgian responses to this question and the wider sample, the distribution of responses reflects the small sample size.

### Question 34

What could help you get more involved in the work of the ENRD? You may select up to three of the options below. Please rank the three most important options below on a scale of 1 – 3 where 1 = most important.

- More flexible administrative rules relating to travel, participations in conferences etc.
- A higher LAG budget
- More available time
- More LAG staff
- More language versions of ENRD documents
- More information from the NRN on ENRD activities
- NRN support
- Less costly methods of participation (e.g. online meetings)
- Access to support for costs of participation in events
- Other, please describe

Total Number of Responses 6



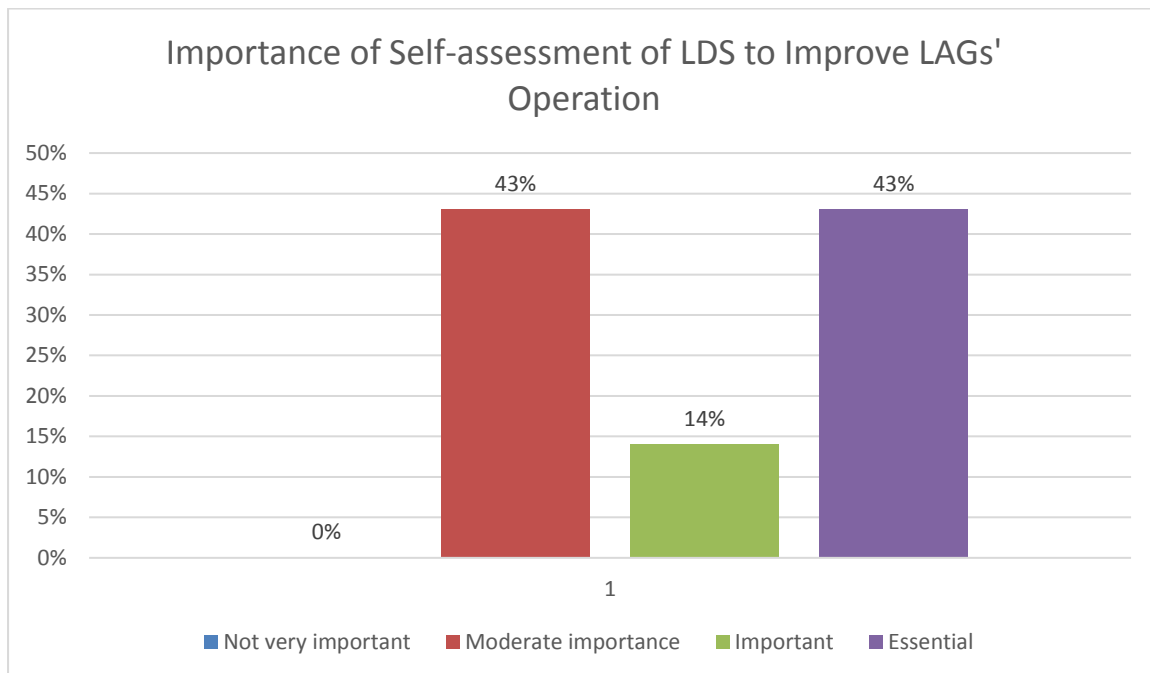
- Belgian LAG's responded in a very similar manner as the EU sample, indicating that 'with more time', 'higher budget', 'more flexible administrative rules relating to travel' and 'more information from NRN on ENRD activities' as the main aspects which would help them to increase their involvement with ENRD in future.

### Question 35

*How important do you think self-assessment (internal review) of your own Local Development Strategy is to improving your LAG's operation?*

- Not very important
- Moderate importance
- Important
- Essential

*Total Number of Responses 7*



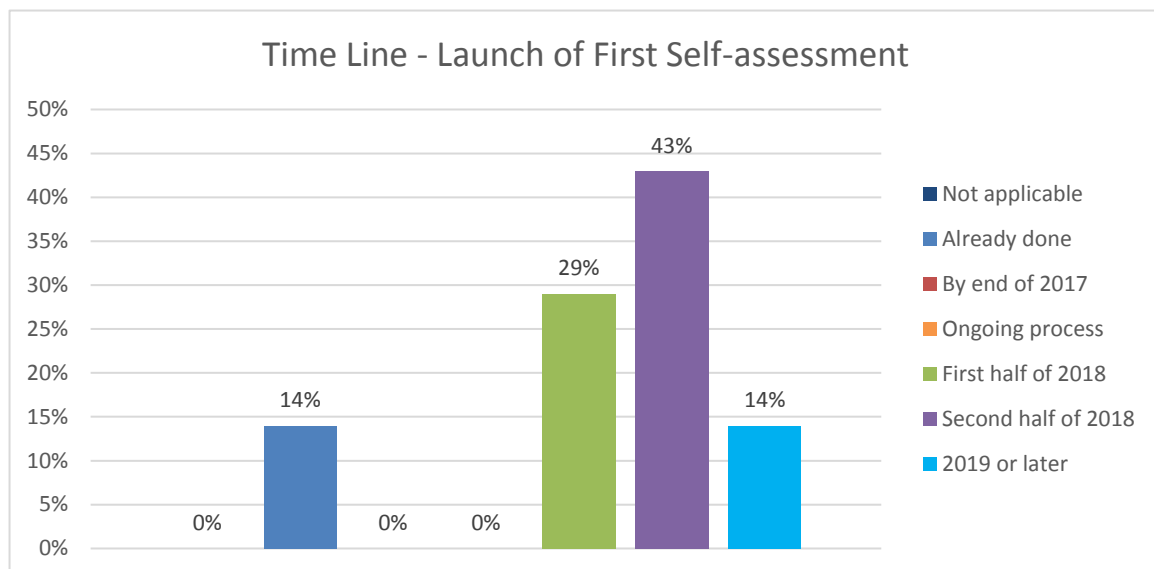
- In comparison to the EU sample, a greater proportion of Belgian LAGs indicated that self-assessment was 'essential' to improve their LAG's operations, 43% in comparison to 28% at the EU level. Similarly, 43% of Belgian LAGs rated self-assessment as being of 'moderate importance' (43% vs 24%).
- None of the Belgian respondents stated that self-assessment was 'not very important' (however, 6% of the EU sample expressed this view.)

### Question 36

*When are you planning to launch your first self-assessment?*

- Already done
- By end of 2017
- First half of 2018
- Second half of 2018
- In 2019 or later
- It is an ongoing process
- Not applicable

*Total Number of Responses 7*



- In Belgium, 14% had already launched their first self-assessment work (the same share as in the total sample). However, most (71%) Belgian respondents indicated they would launch their first self-assessment in 2018.
- While 18% of LAGs across Europe implement self-assessment as an 'ongoing process', none of the Belgian LAGs did.

### Question 37

*Are you willing to participate in further LEADER work with the ENRD (e.g. a focus group, practitioner-working group, other forms)?*

- Yes – 57%
- No – 43%

*Total Number of Responses 7*