LEADER LAG Survey 2017

Working Paper

Findings at Member State level

Member State: Ireland

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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 paper summarises the responses from respondent LAGs in Ireland. 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 document all the 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

- Ireland (IE)
- 10 LAGs responded, representing 1.41% of total LAG responses
- 34% of IE LAGs responded to the survey

Question 2

Please select your Rural Development Programme (RDP)
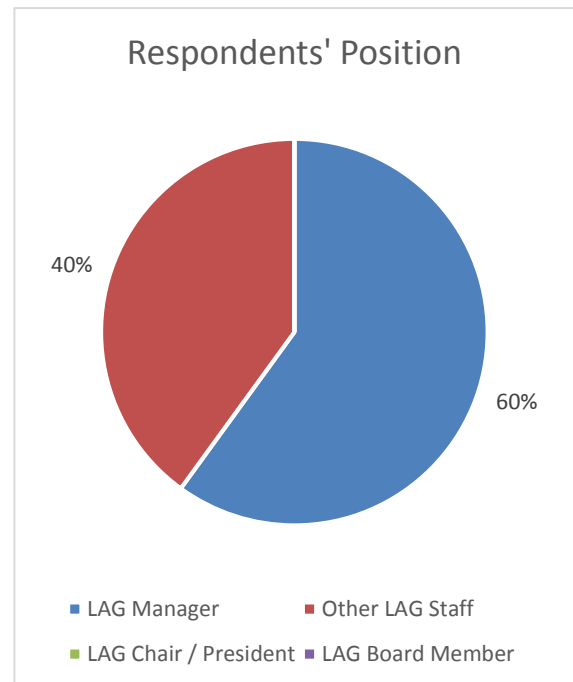
- IE has one national programme.

Total Number of Responses 10

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 10

Respondents' Position

40%

60%

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

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 10

- Irish responses included a larger proportion of new LAGs than the EU sample; 70% became operational in the current programme period in Ireland as opposed to 22% in the EU sample.

- 20% of Irish respondents said they had been operational since LEADER I as opposed to 8% in the EU sample.

First Period LAG became Operational

20%

10%

70%

■ New LAG 2014-2020 ■ 2007-2013 ■ LEADER+ LAG
■ LEADER II ■ LEADER I
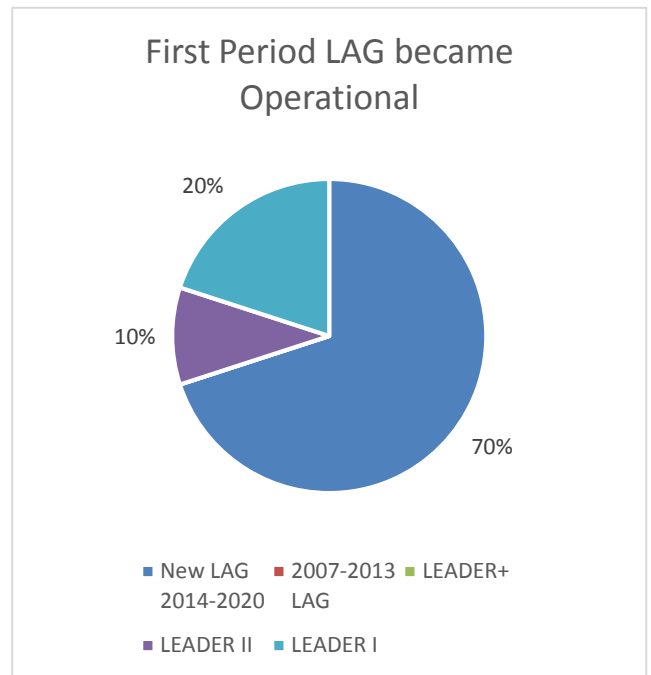
Question 8

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 10

Time LAGs were Formally Selected in 2014-2020 Programme Period
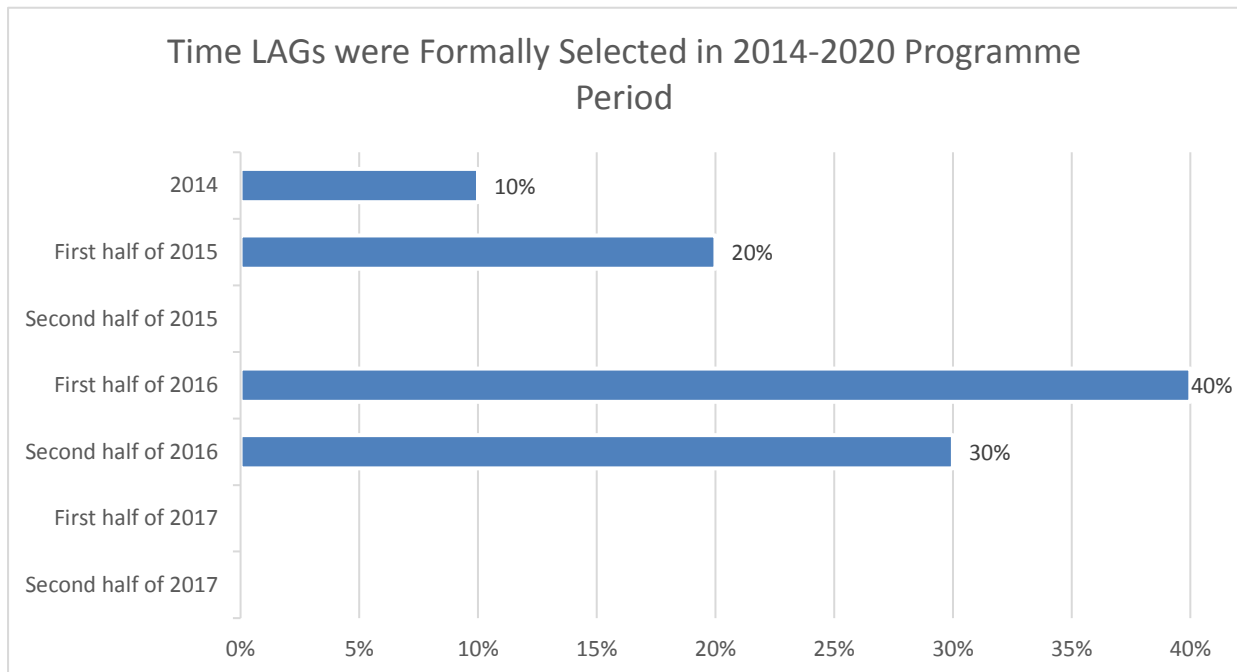
- 70% of Irish LAGs were formally selected in 2016, much higher than the EU-wide average figure of 31%.

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 10
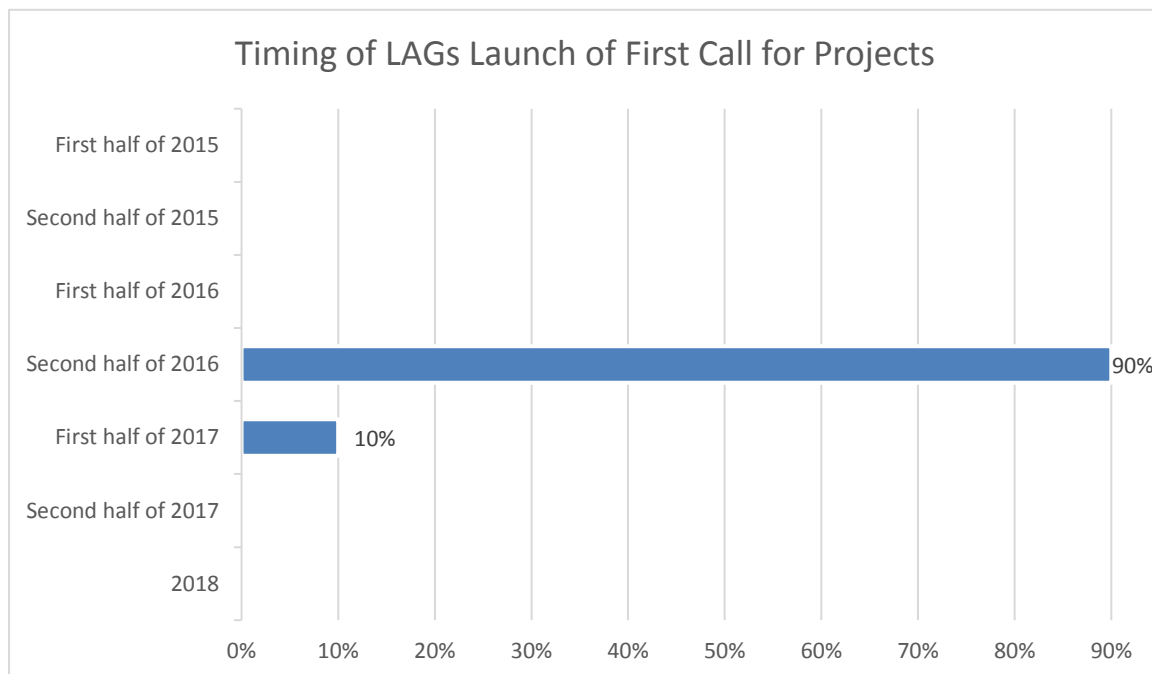
- By the end of the first half of 2016 51% of EU LAGs had launched a project call compared to 0% of Irish LAGs. However, by the end of 2016 all Irish LAGs had launched a call, as opposed to 67% of EU LAGs.

LAG Funding

Question 10

Please select all the European Structural and Investment Funds that your LAG uses to finance 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 9

It should be noted that the percentages sum up to more than 100% reflecting LAGs use of multiple funds.
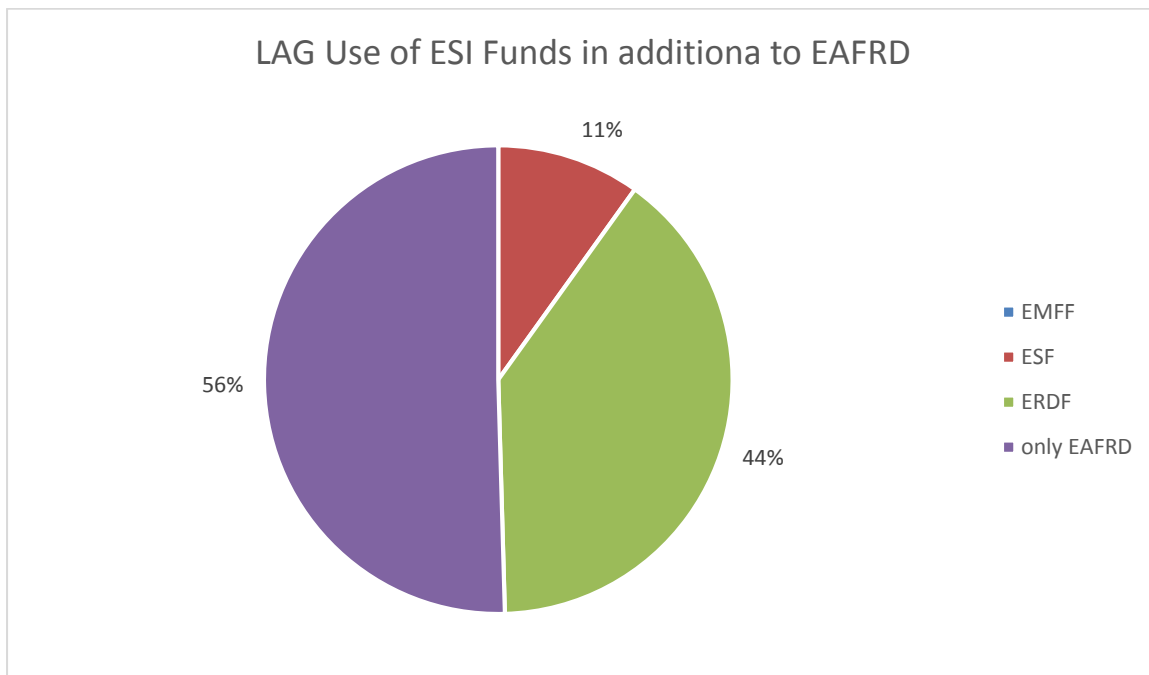
- A higher proportion of Irish LAGs reporting use multiple funds (44%) than was the case across the EU sample (33%), 56% of Irish LAGs used EAFRD only as opposed to the EU-wide average of 67%. ERDF was used by 44% of Irish LAGs vs 25% of EU LAGs.

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 9

Range of Budgets from Responding LAGs

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

Pie chart segments labelled 11%, 11%, 78%.
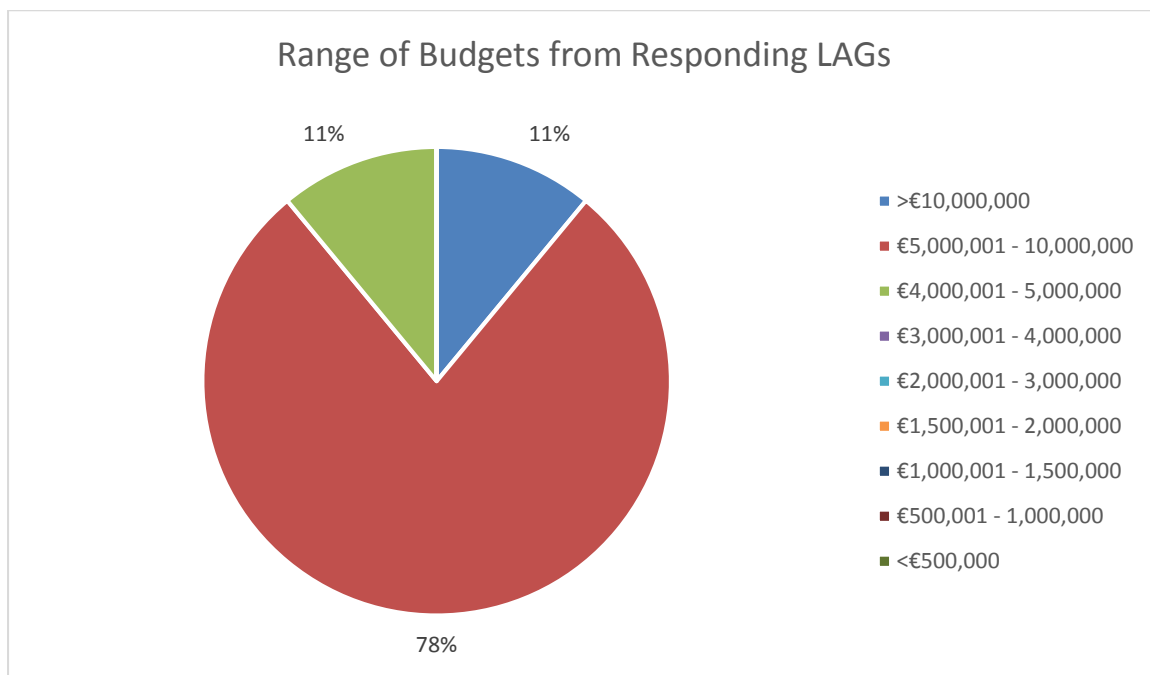
- 100% of Irish LAGs who responded had budgets in excess of €4m, compared to 29% of the LAGs from the EU-wide sample.

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 9

- 100% of Irish LAGs reported a running costs and animation budget allocation of between 21 and 25% compared to 11% in the EU sample.

% of LAG Budget Spent on Animation & Running Costs

100%

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

LEADER Principles

Question 13

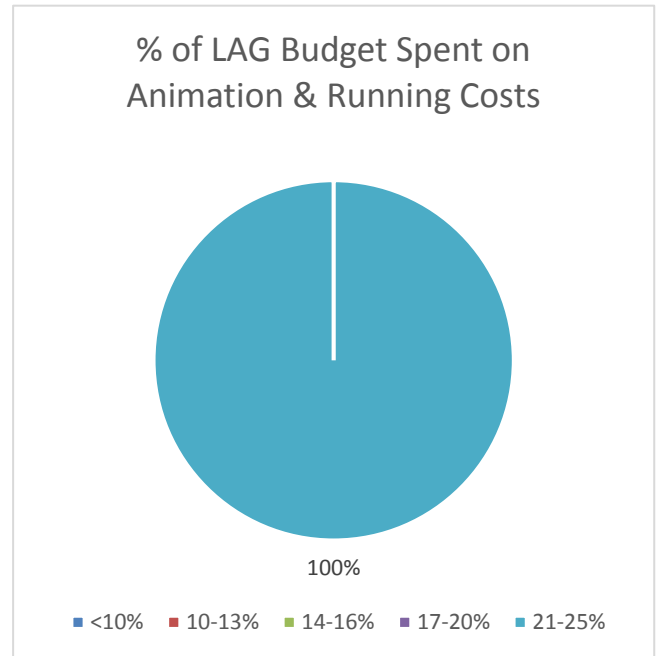*How important are each of the following LEADER principles for your LAG in delivering real benefits on the ground? (Please rate each option from 1= not at all to 5 = essential).*

- 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 9

Relative Importance of LEADER Principles

Principle	Essential	Important	Medium importance
Bottom-up approach	78%		22%
Local public private partnerships	56%	33%	11%
Area based LDSs	67%	22%	11%
Networking	22%	44%	33%
Multi-sectoral	44%	44%	11%
Innovative approaches	33%	56%	11%
50% requirement in project selection	44%	33%	22%
Cooperation projects		56%	44%
49% limitation on voting rights	44%	33%	22%

Legend: ■ Essential ■ Important ■ Medium importance ■ Low importance ■ Not at all
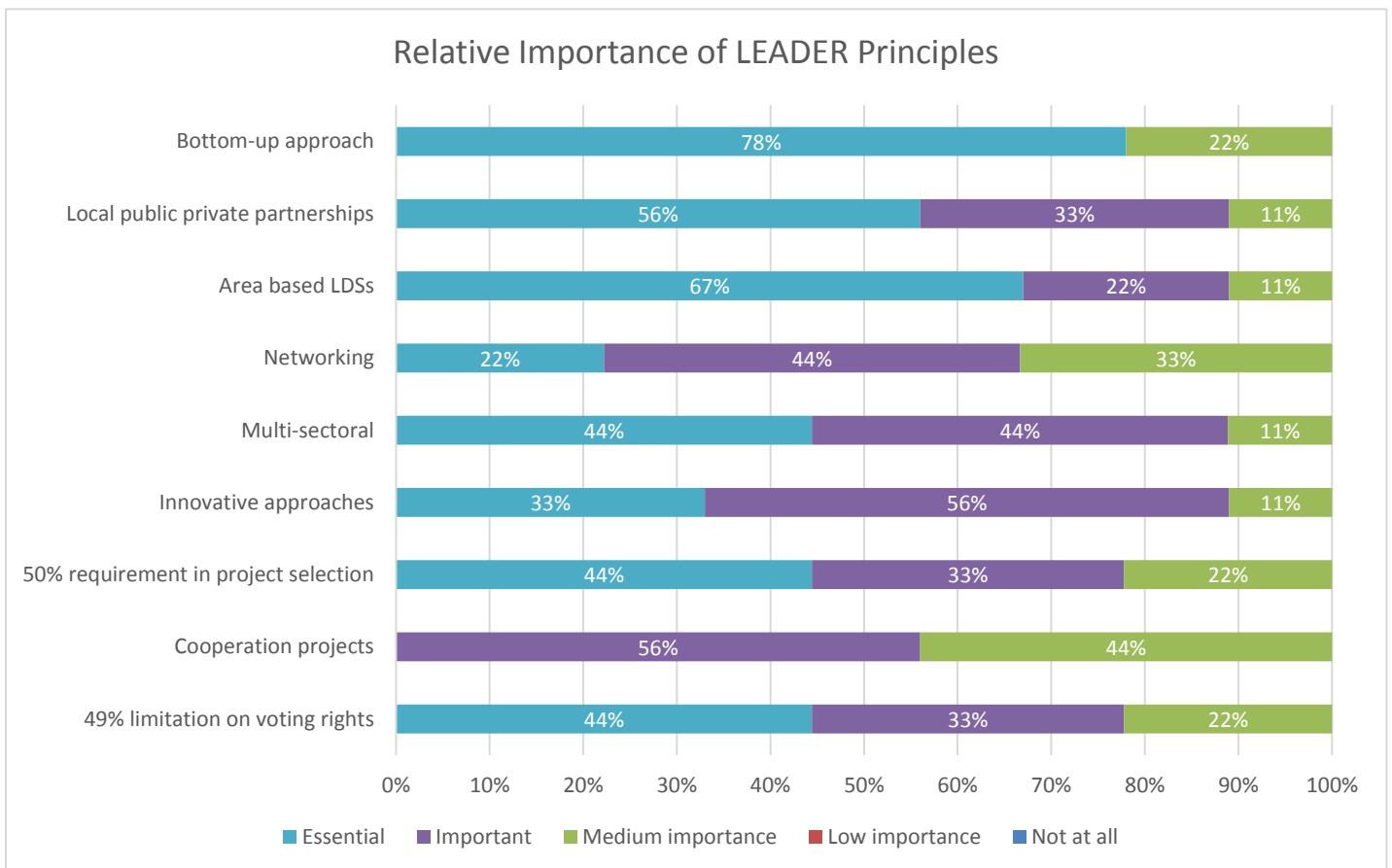
- The three LEADER principles regarded as essential most often amongst the Irish LAGs who responded matched those of the wider sample, the bottom-up approach, area based LDS and local public private partnerships, (scored as essential by 78%, 67% and 56% of respondents respectively). The same three principles were also most often regarded as essential amongst the EU LAGs (73%, 58% and 62% respectively).

- Irish LAGs who responded placed greater importance (essential and important) on innovative approaches (89% vs 58%), the 50% requirement in project selection (77% vs 64%) and the 49% limitation on voting rights (77% vs 53%)than did the EU sample.

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.
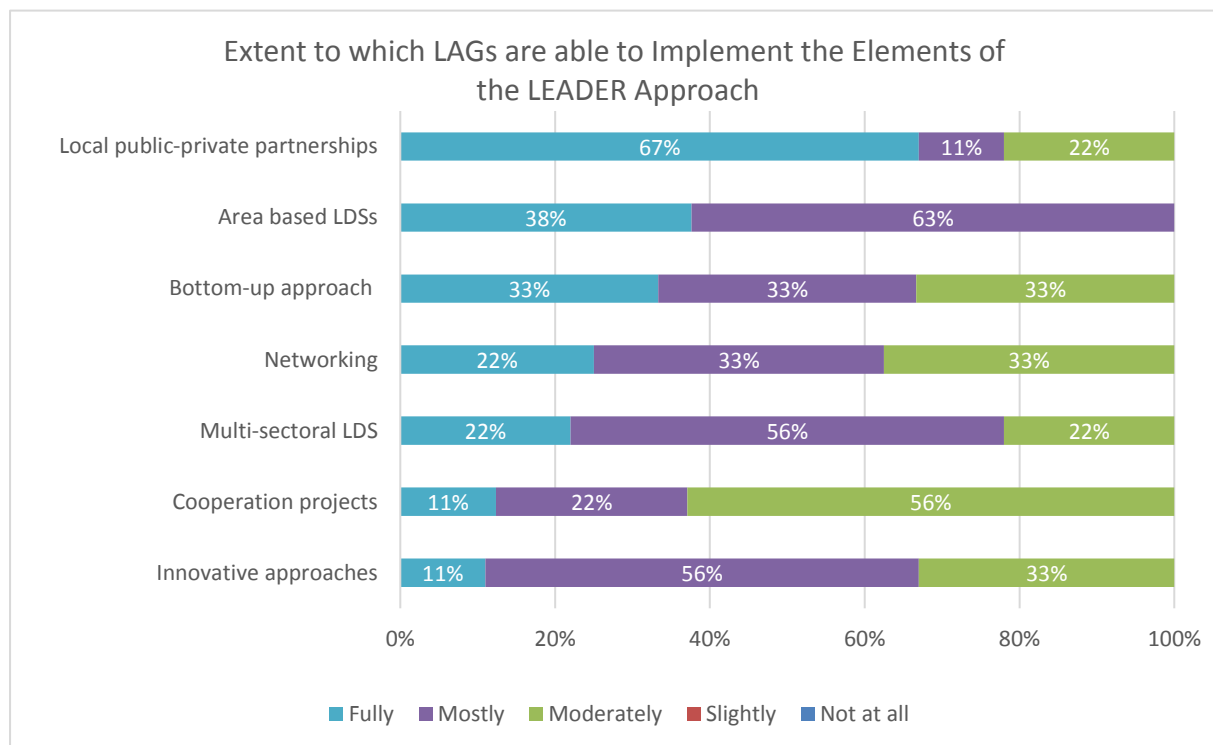- Networking of local partnerships.

Total Number of Responses 9

Extent to which LAGs are able to Implement the Elements of the LEADER Approach

- With the exception of local public - private partnerships Irish LAGs reported that they are less to fully the elements of the LEADER approach compared to the EU sample LAGs however when fully and mostly ratings are taken together there is less difference. Cooperation projects can be fully or mostly implemented by only 33% of Irish LAGs vs 58% of the EU sample, networking by 55% vs 75%. Innovative approaches can be fully nor mostly implemented by 67% of Irish respondents vs 54% of the wider sample.
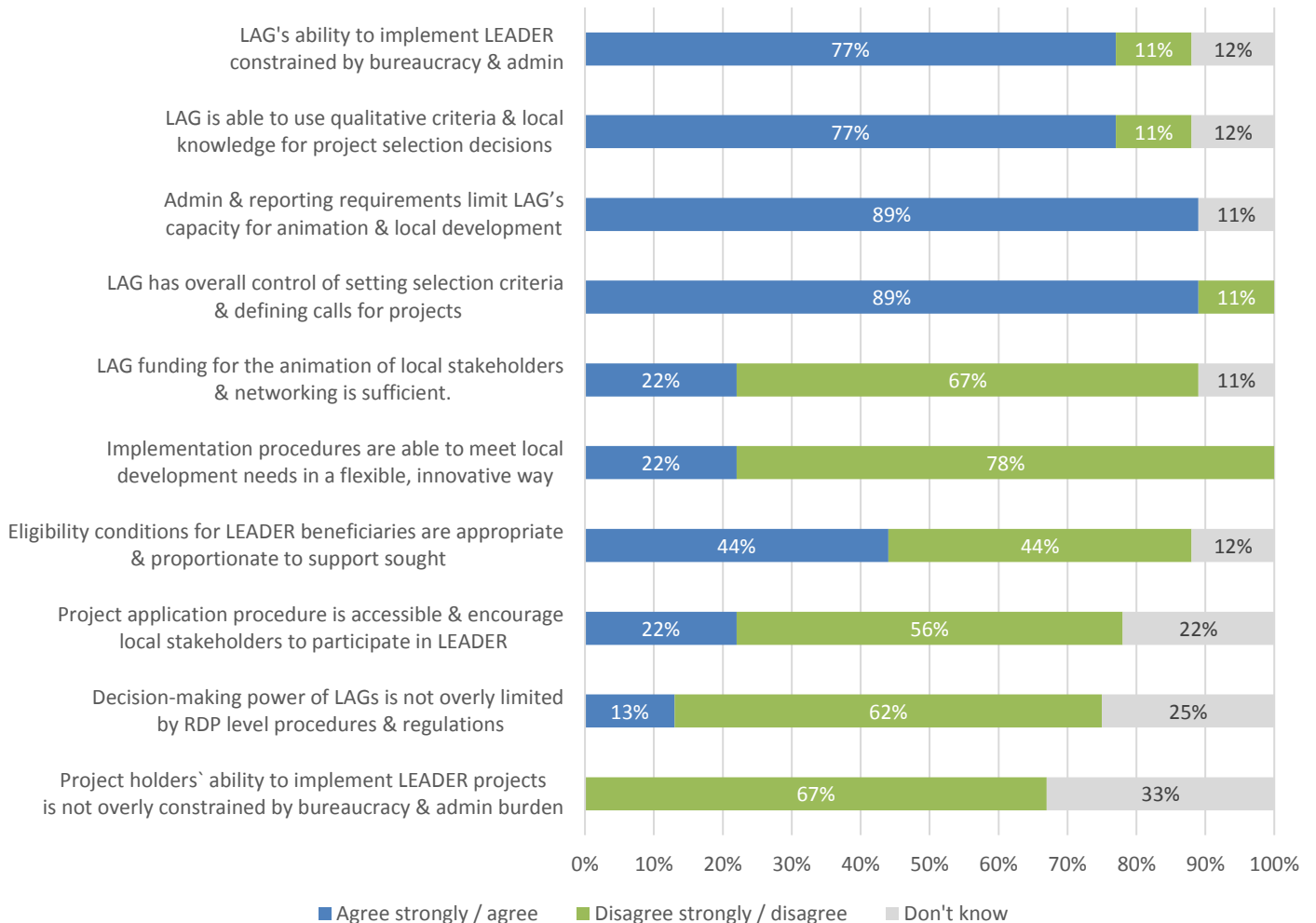
Question 15

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 9

Aspects of LEADER Implementation as seen by Local Action Groups

Statement	Agree strongly / agree	Disagree strongly / disagree	Don't know
LAG's ability to implement LEADER constrained by bureaucracy & admin	77%	11%	12%
LAG is able to use qualitative criteria & local knowledge for project selection decisions	77%	11%	12%
Admin & reporting requirements limit LAG's capacity for animation & local development	89%		11%
LAG has overall control of setting selection criteria & defining calls for projects	89%	11%	
LAG funding for the animation of local stakeholders & networking is sufficient.	22%	67%	11%
Implementation procedures are able to meet local development needs in a flexible, innovative way	22%	78%	
Eligibility conditions for LEADER beneficiaries are appropriate & proportionate to support sought	44%	44%	12%
Project application procedure is accessible & encourage local stakeholders to participate in LEADER	22%	56%	22%
Decision-making power of LAGs is not overly limited by RDP level procedures & regulations	13%	62%	25%
Project holders` ability to implement LEADER projects is not overly constrained by bureaucracy & admin burden		67%	33%

Legend: ■ Agree strongly / agree ■ Disagree strongly / disagree ■ Don't know

- Overall the Irish and EU sample response pattern was broadly similar although individual responses differed by degree of agreement. Overall the Irish LAGs tended to indicate a lower level of agreement with positive statements and a higher level of agreement with negative statements.

- Compared to the EU sample Irish LAGs reported a higher level of agreement with the statement that the LAG has overall control of setting selection criteria and defining calls for projects (89% vs 66%).

- A greater proportion of Irish LAGs consider that admin and reporting requirements limit LAGs capacity for animation and local development (89% vs 69%) whilst a smaller proportion of Irish LAGs agree that implementation procedures are able to meet local development needs in a flexible, innovative way (22% vs 51% agreement at EU level).
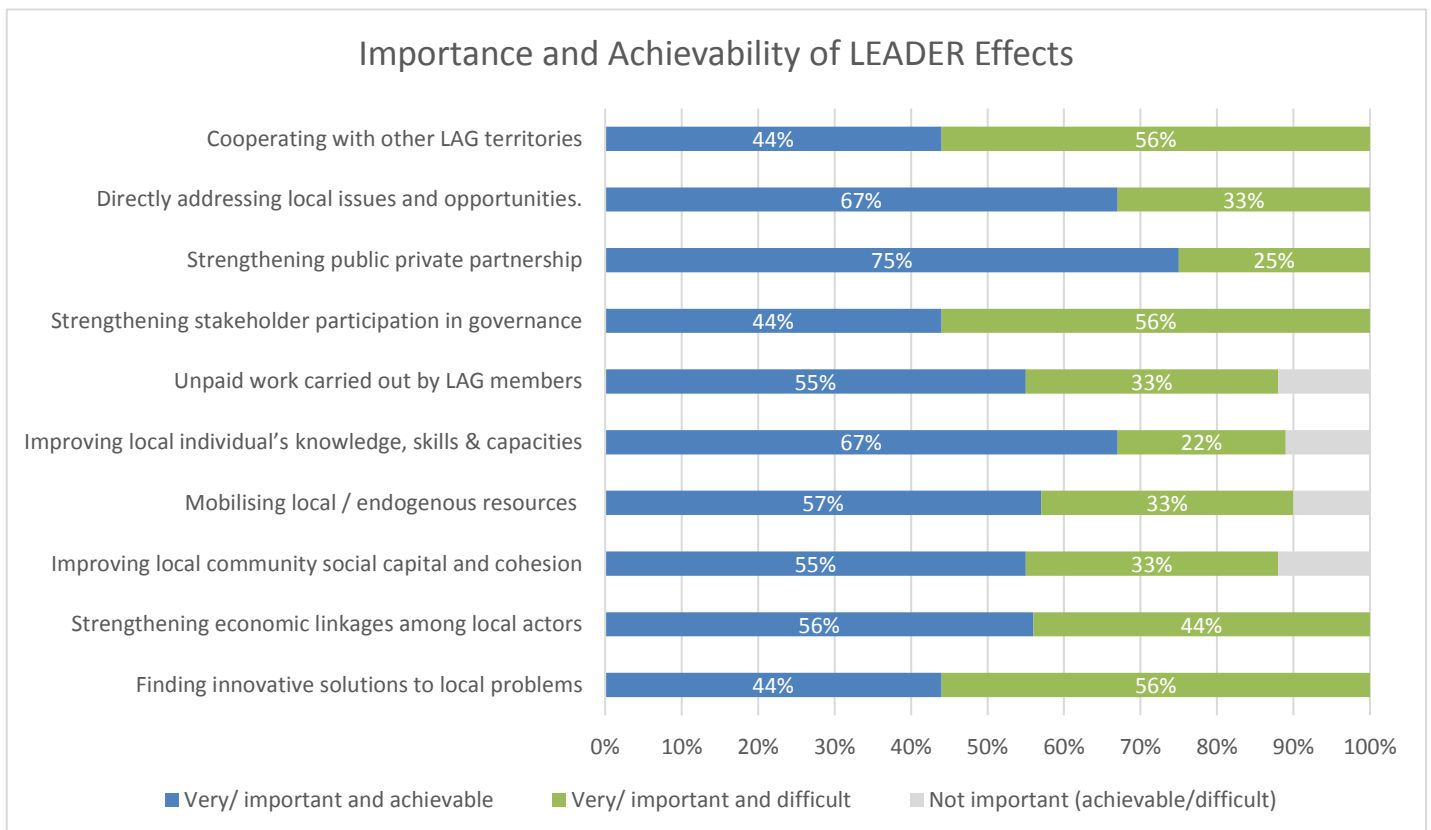
Question 16

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 9

Importance and Achievability of LEADER Effects

Effect	Very/ important and achievable	Very/ important and difficult	Not important (achievable/difficult)
Cooperating with other LAG territories	44%	56%	
Directly addressing local issues and opportunities.	67%	33%	
Strengthening public private partnership	75%	25%	
Strengthening stakeholder participation in governance	44%	56%	
Unpaid work carried out by LAG members	55%	33%	
Improving local individual's knowledge, skills & capacities	67%	22%	
Mobilising local / endogenous resources	57%	33%	
Improving local community social capital and cohesion	55%	33%	
Strengthening economic linkages among local actors	56%	44%	
Finding innovative solutions to local problems	44%	56%	

■ Very/ important and achievable   ■ Very/ important and difficult   ■ Not important (achievable/difficult)

- Irish LAGs judged the following LEADER effects to be more difficult to achieve than the EU sample; Cooperation with other LAG territories (56% of IE LAGs state it as important and difficult to achieve compared to 28% of the EU LAGs) and strengthening stakeholder participation in governance (56% vs 42%).

- Irish LAGs judged the remaining LEADER effects to be equally or more achievable than the EU average. Strengthening economic linkages amongst local actors (56% of IE LAGs judged it as important and achievable vs 37% of the EU sample) and Improving local individual's knowledge, skills and capacities (67% vs 48%) were the two LEADER effects with the largest positive variation between the IE and EU samples.

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 9

Level of Effects on LEADER Implementation
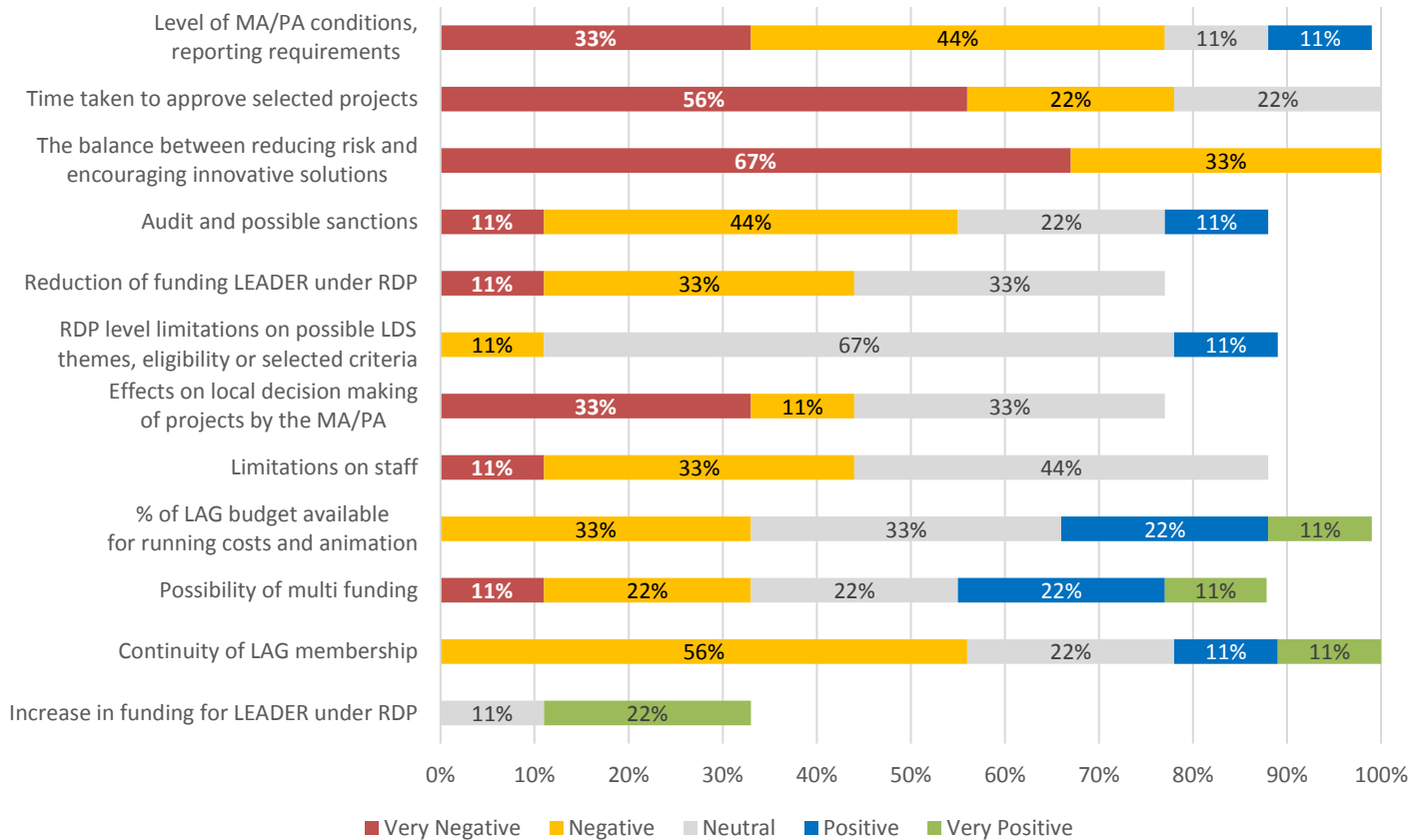
For the purposes of improving the clarity of the analysis the 'not applicable' responses have been removed from the chart.

- LAGs in Ireland were most negative about the balance between reducing risk and encouraging innovative solutions (100% negative or very negative) and the time taken to approve selected projects (78%). By comparison across the EU the two effects were judged to be negative or very negative by 63% and 69% respectively.

- The effects on local decision making of projects by MA / PA was perceived very negatively by a higher proportion of Irish than EU respondents (33% vs 19%). LAGs were markedly more negative regarding the continuity of LAG membership in Ireland than in the EU sample (56% very / negative) vs 11%.

- LAGs in Ireland were most positive about the percentage of LAG budget available for running costs and animation and the possibility of multi-funding, with both effects judged to be positive or very positive by 33% of Irish LAGs, similar to the EU-wide average positive score of 32% and 37% respectively.

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 8
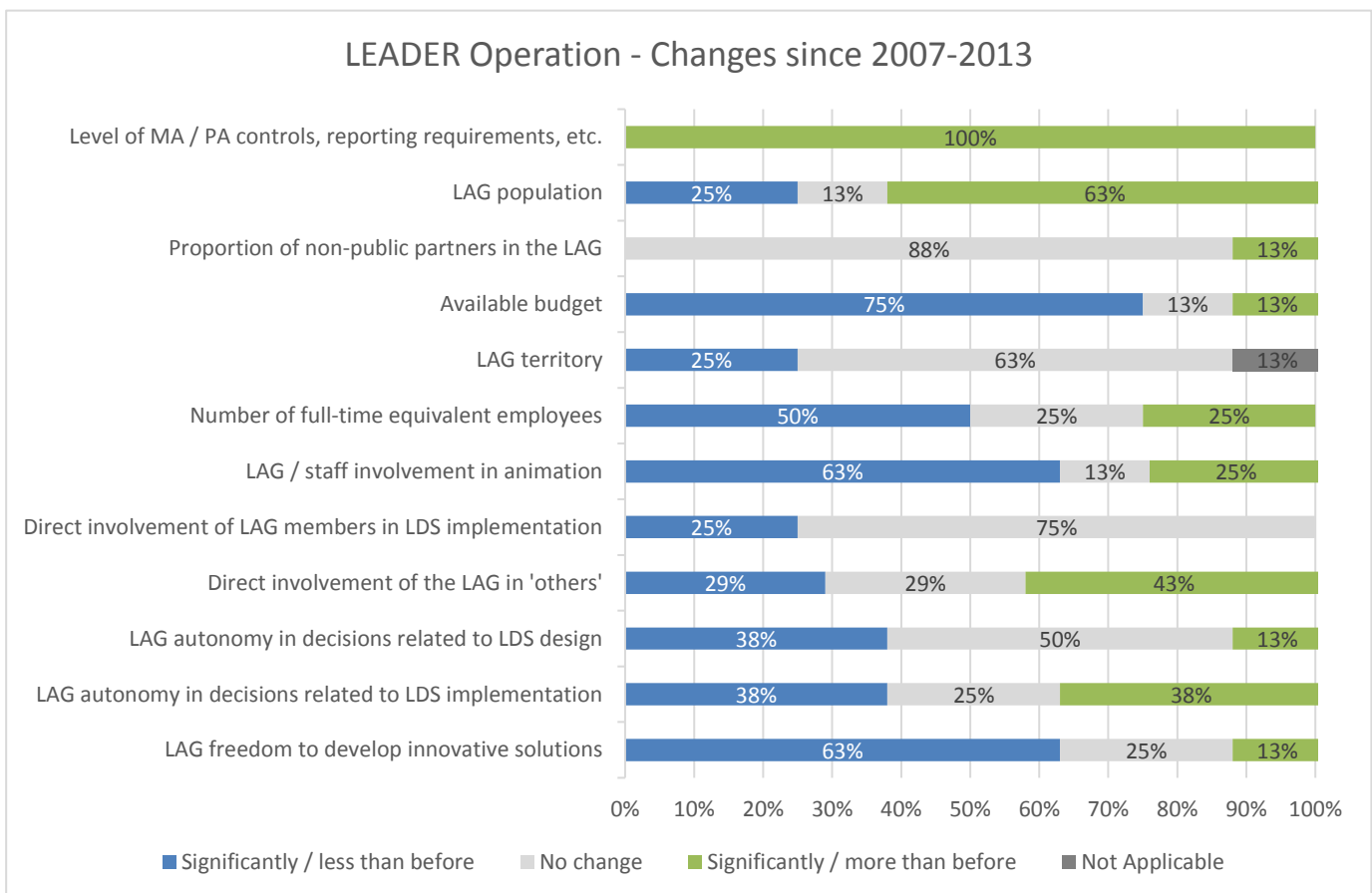
- 100% of responding Irish LAGs reported that the level of MA/PA controls, reporting requirements etc were significantly/more than before, in comparison to the EU wide average of 63%.

- Half of responding Irish LAGs (50%) indicated that the number of full-time equivalent employees were significantly/less than before, compared to 20% in the EU sample. They also reported that there was significantly/less than before LAG/Staff involvement in animation, 63% compared to 18% in the EU sample.

- There was a drop in the reported LAG freedom to develop innovative solutions, with 63% of responding Irish LAGs saying it was less than the previous programme, compared to 37% of the EU sample.

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.

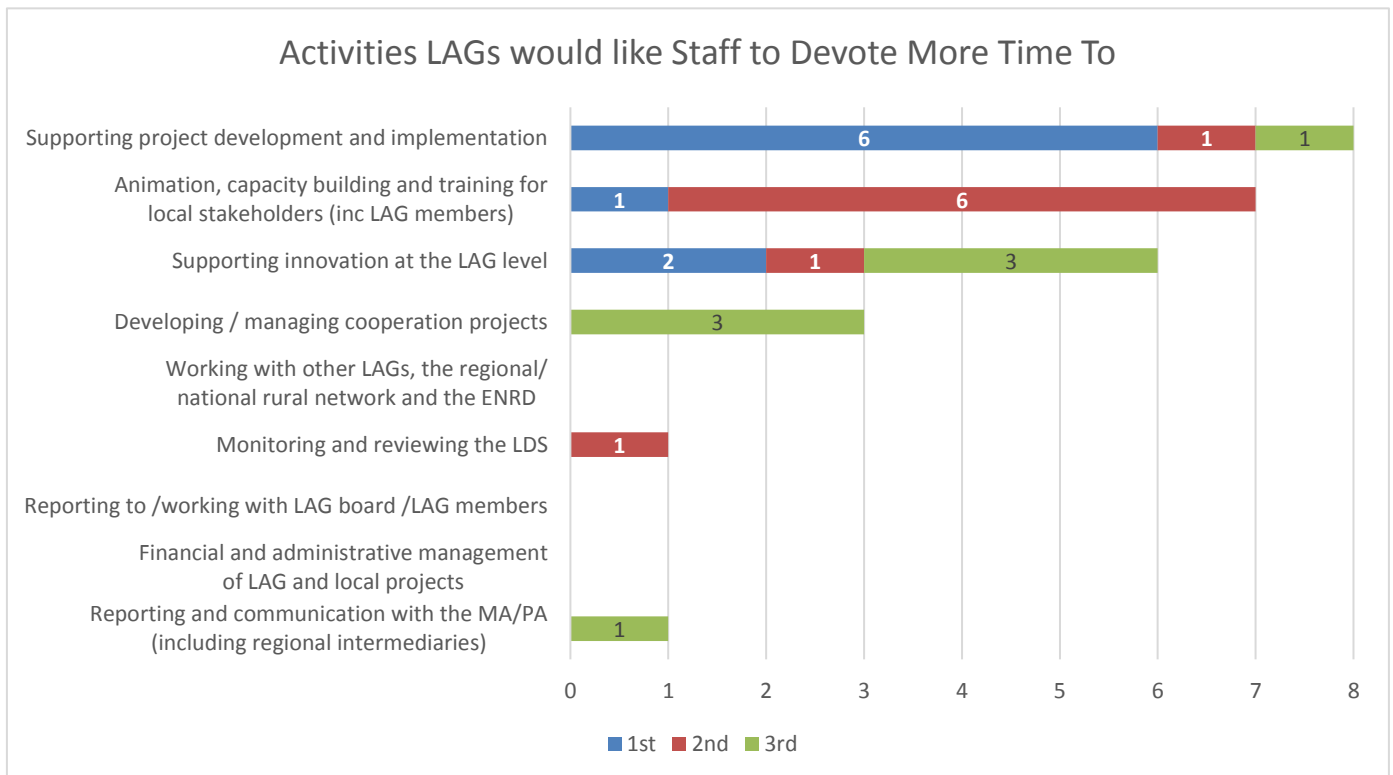*Total Number of Responses 9*
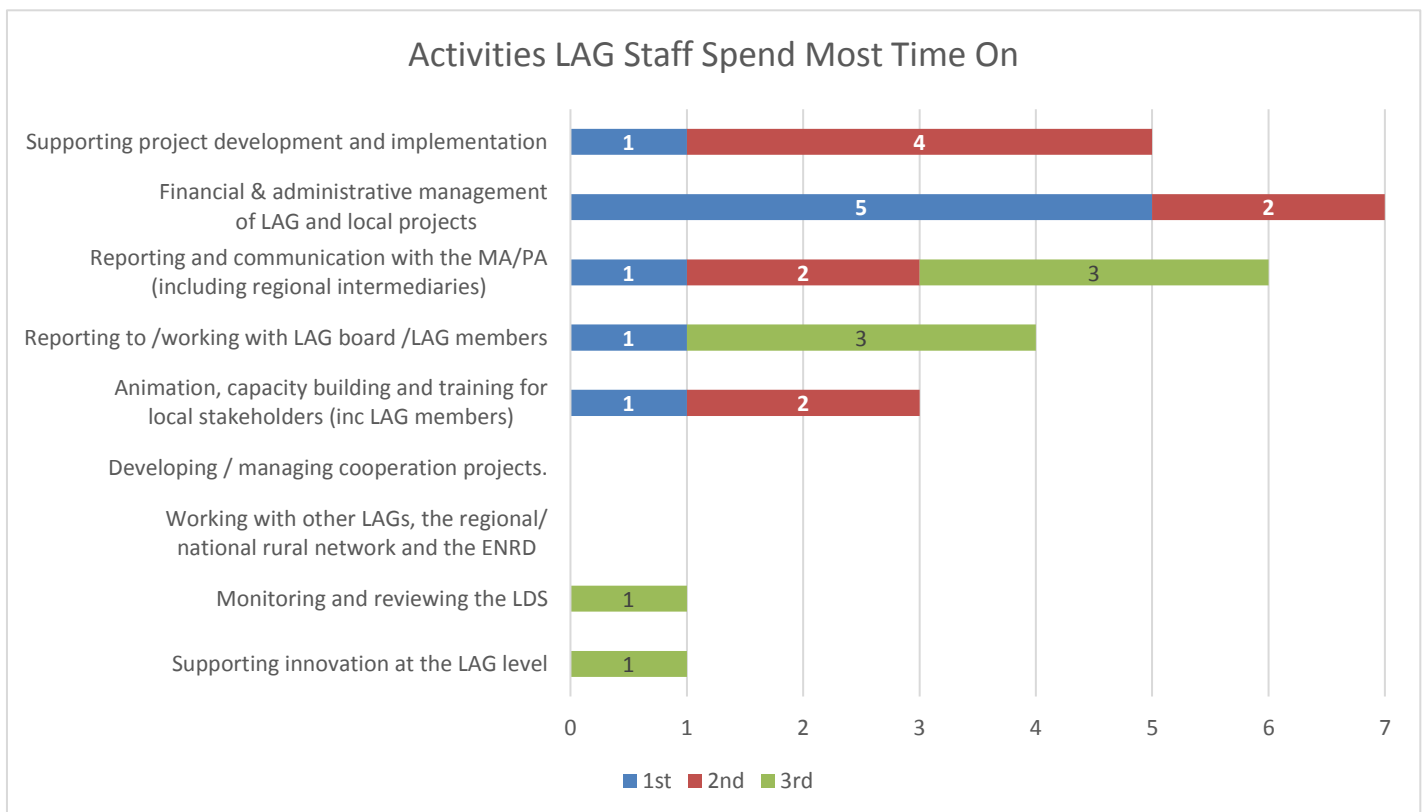
- The most frequently ranked top 3 activity amongst the Irish LAGs was financial and administration management of LAG and local projects and, this ranked second in the EU sample.

- Supporting project development and implementation and reporting and communication with the MA / PA were the other two top 3 activities in both samples.

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 9

- There were few differences in activity ranking between the Irish LAGs and the wider sample other than for the gaps in the above chart, partly a function of relative sample size.

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 8

- There were few differences in activity ranking between the Irish LAGs and the wider sample other than for the gaps in the above chart, partly a function of relative sample size.
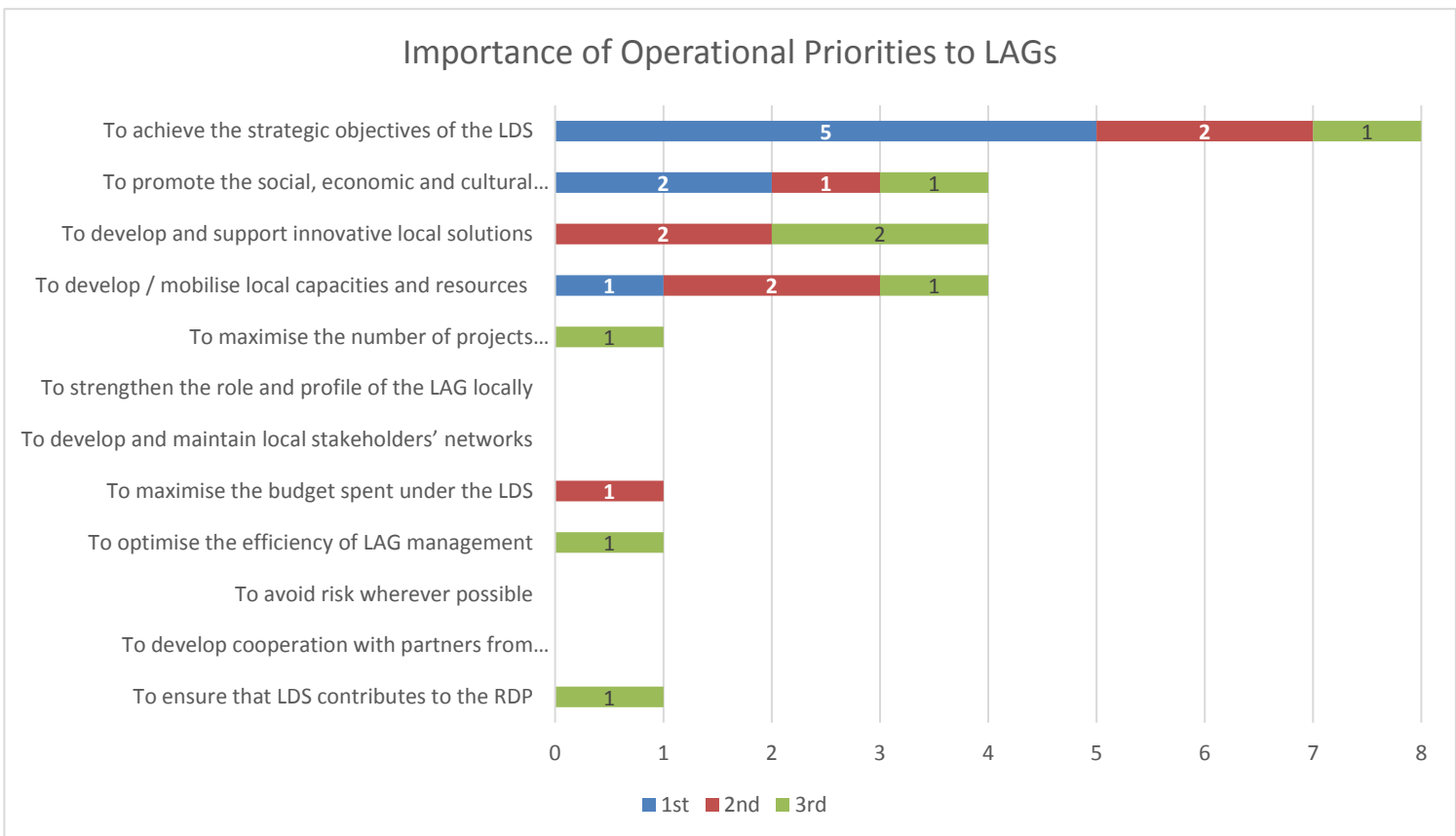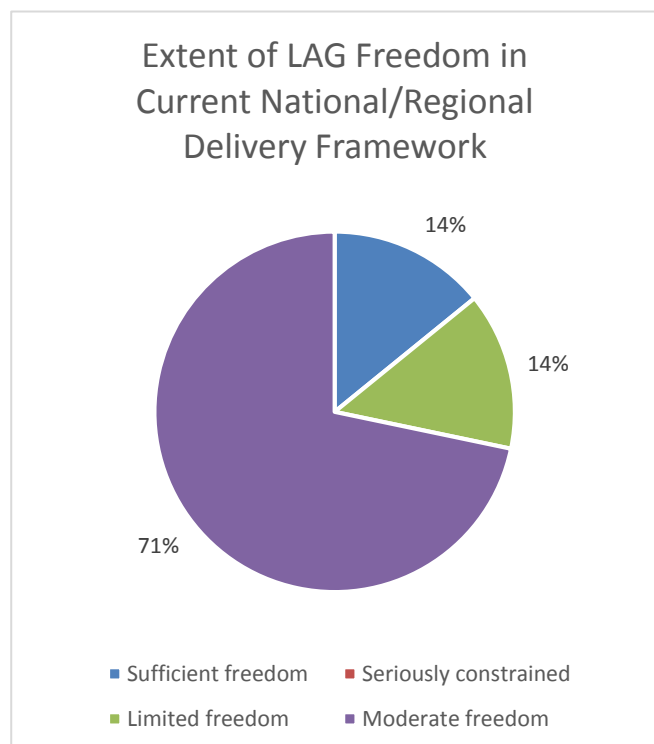
Question 22

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

- There is a marked difference between the Irish LAGs response to this question and the overall survey, with 71% of Irish LAGs ranking their level of freedom to pursue their priorities as moderate as opposed to just 45% in the EU wide sample.

- A lower proportion of the Irish LAGs said that their freedom is limited or seriously constrained (14%) compared to the EU wide sample (38%).

Extent of LAG Freedom in Current National/Regional Delivery Framework

14%

14%

71%

- Sufficient freedom
- Seriously constrained
- Limited freedom
- Moderate freedom

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 9
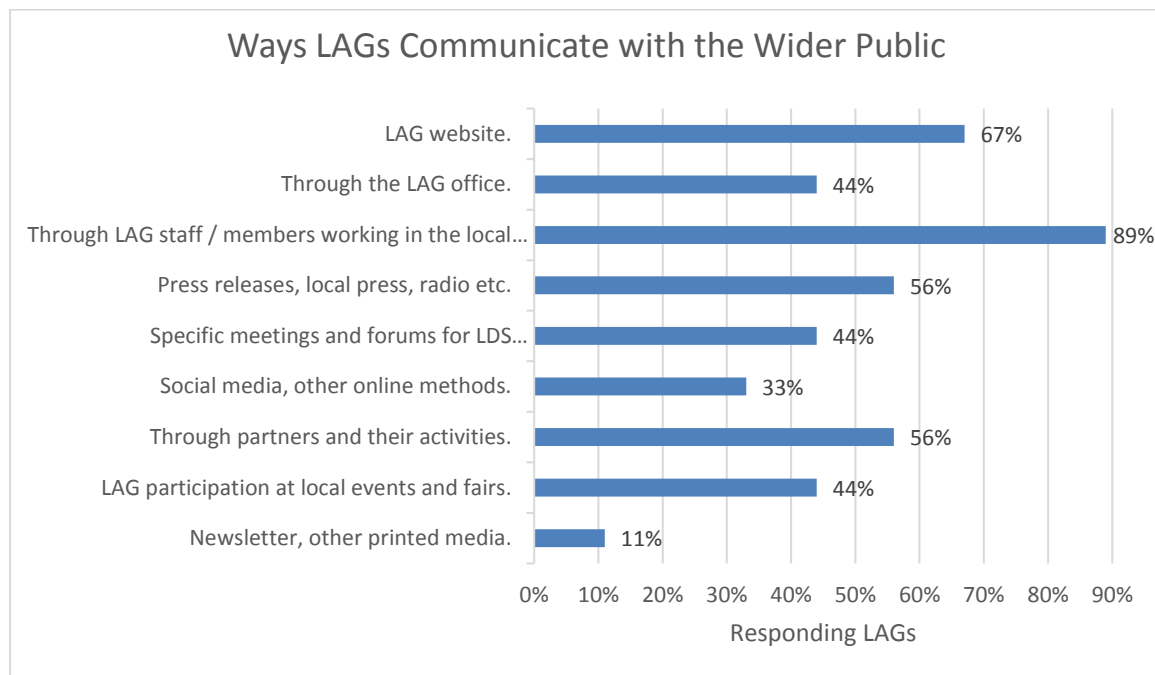

- A larger proportion of Irish LAGs report that they communicate through LAG staff / members working in the local community compared to the overall EU-wide sample (89% vs 66%).

- Newsletters and other printed media are used by a much smaller proportion of LAGs in Ireland compared to the EU wide sample (11% vs 45%) as is the LAG website (67% vs 89%) and the LAG office (44% vs 71%).

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 9

Ways LAGs Receive Information from MA/PA

| Method	%
Email	100%
Regular meetings and forums organised for LAGs	56%
Managing Authority website	11%
Through National Rural Network	
Through intermediary e.g. regional office or network	33%
Printed publications and guidance	22%
Social media	
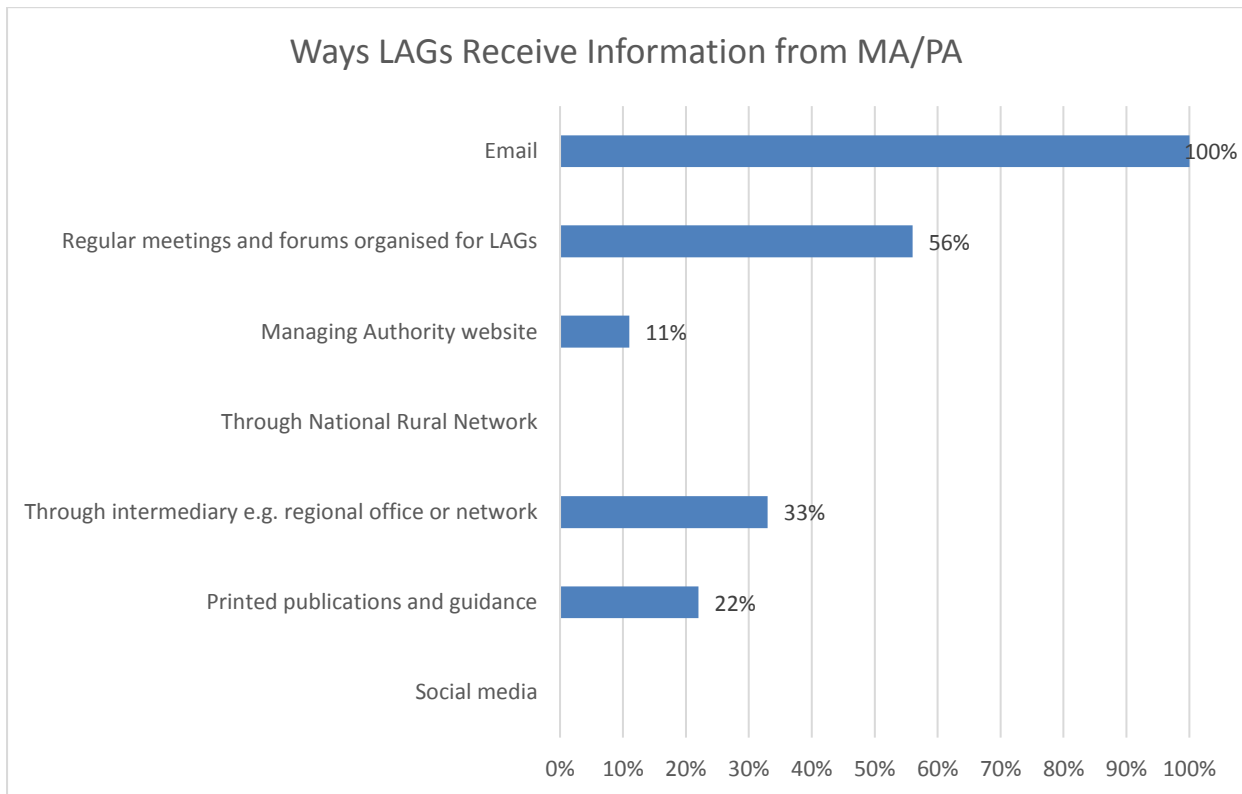
- In common with the EU-wide sample, e-mail and regular meetings and forums organised for LAGs were the most common methods by which LAGs receive information from the MA and PA.

- However, the MA website (11% vs 34%) and the NRN (0% vs 31%) are markedly less frequently used methods in Ireland compared to the EU-wide sample.

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 9
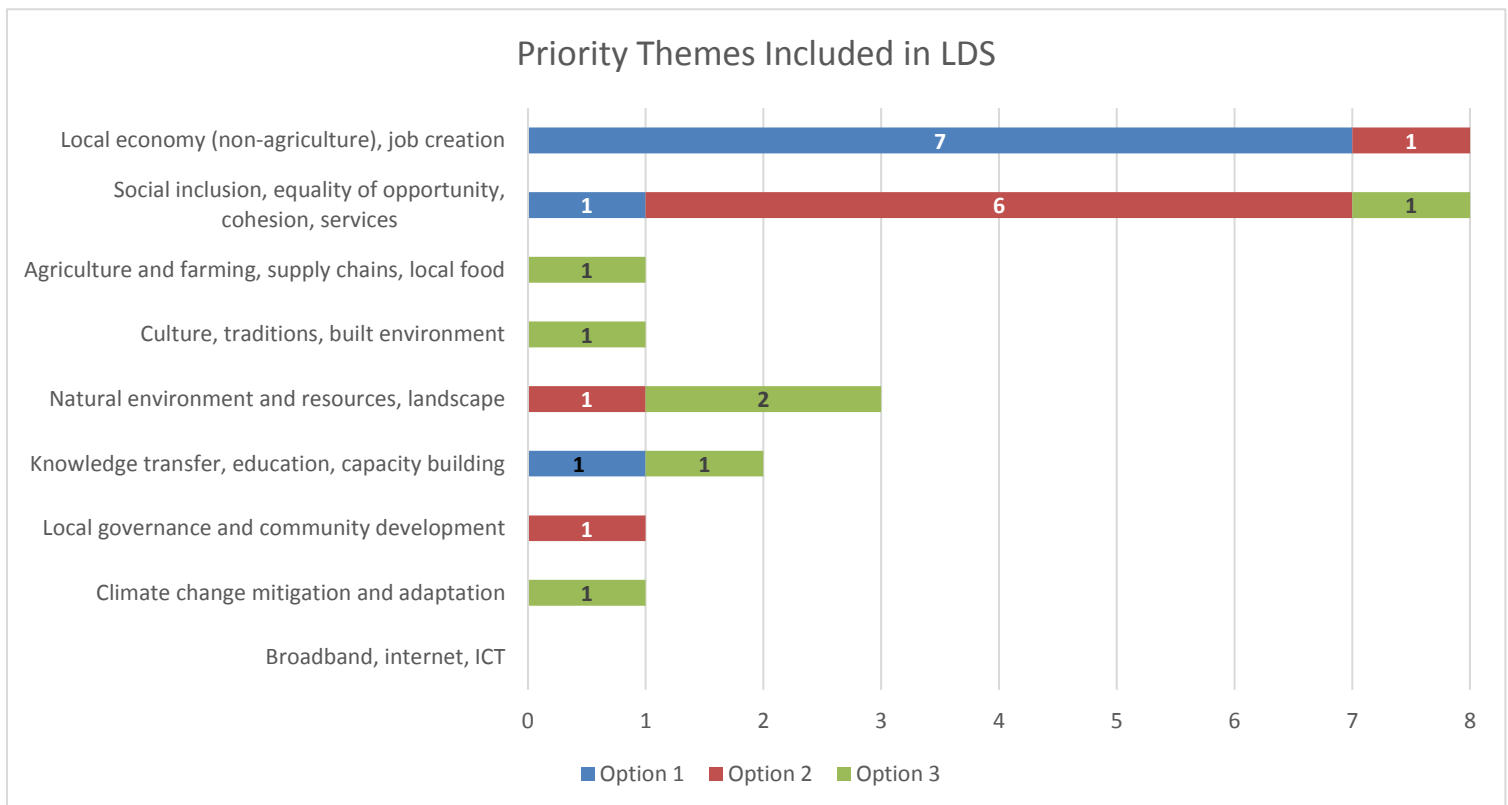
- In common with the EU-wide sample, local economy (non-agricultural) and social inclusion, equality of opportunity, cohesion, service were the most frequently ranked priority themes. However, cultural, traditions, built environment and agriculture and farming, supply chains and local food were proportionately much less frequently identified in Ireland compared to the EU-wide sample.

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 9

- The major difference with the EU-wide sample is that the majority of Irish LAGs (78%) undertake project selection, formal approval and payment of claims, whereas across the EU this is much less frequent (19%).

Tasks Performed by LAGs

- ■ Project selection only
- ■ Project selection and formal approval
- ■ Project selection and payment of claims
- ■ Project selection, formal approval and payment of claims
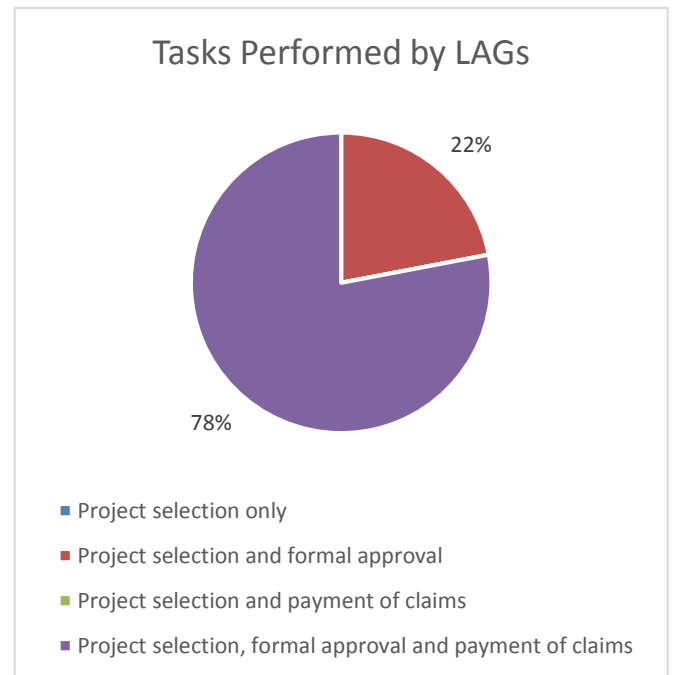
LEADER Improvements

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)
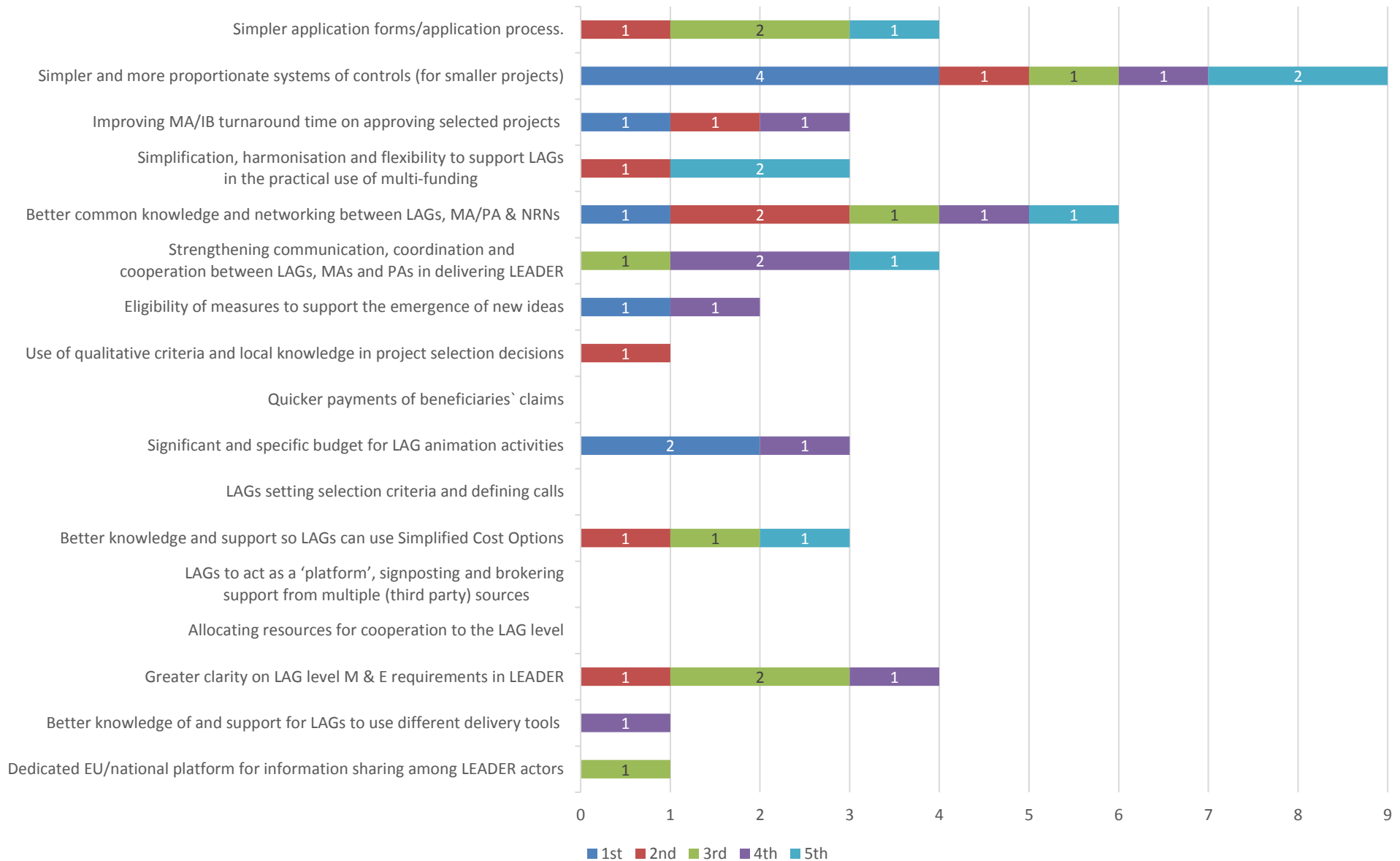
- Better common knowledge and support through networking of LAGs, Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies and National Rural Networks and exchanges on transferable experience and practices
- The eligibility of measures to support the emergence of new ideas, e.g. the use of feasibility studies, LAG led 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 9

- Although the changes regarded as most important to improve implementation in the overall sample were largely mirrored in the Irish sample greater priority is placed on simpler and more proportionate systems of controls than in the wider sample.
- Better common knowledge and networking between LAGs, MA/PA and NRNs is also accorded higher priority in Ireland ranked 2nd vs 5th in the EU sample.

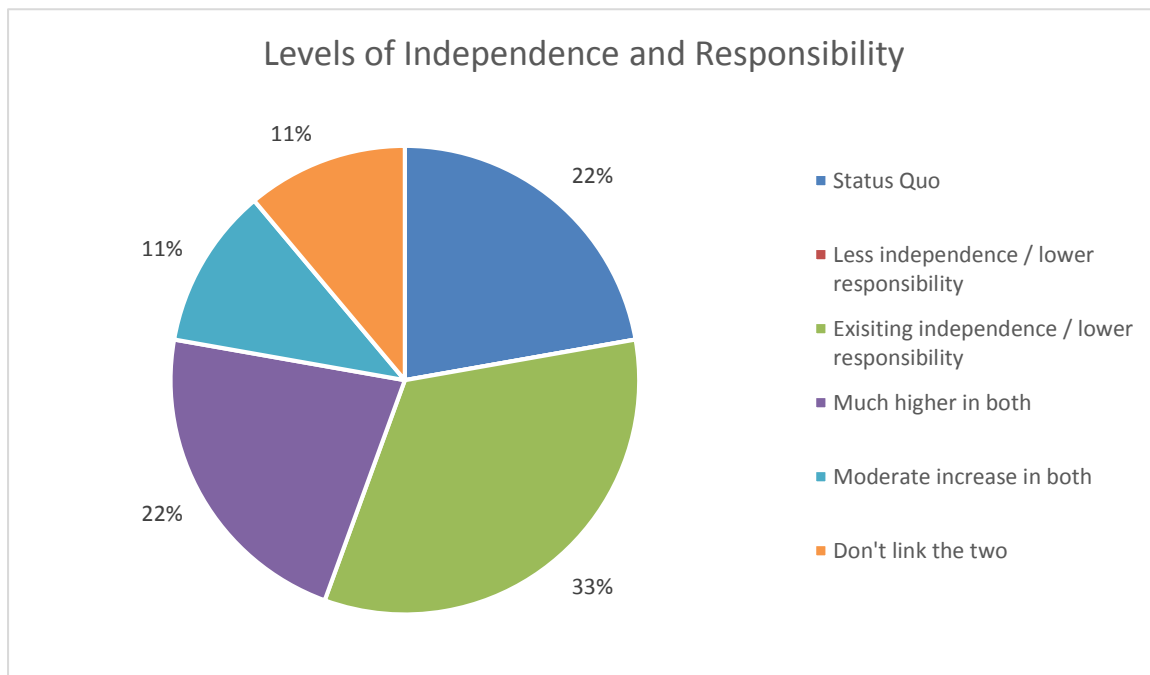Most Important Changes to Improve Implementation Now

Change	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Simpler application forms/application process.		1	2		1
Simpler and more proportionate systems of controls (for smaller projects)	4	1	1	1	2
Improving MA/IB turnaround time on approving selected projects	1	1		1	
Simplification, harmonisation and flexibility to support LAGs in the practical use of multi-funding		1			2
Better common knowledge and networking between LAGs, MA/PA & NRNs	1	2	1	1	1
Strengthening communication, coordination and cooperation between LAGs, MAs and PAs in delivering LEADER			1	2	1
Eligibility of measures to support the emergence of new ideas	1			1	
Use of qualitative criteria and local knowledge in project selection decisions		1			
Quicker payments of beneficiaries` claims					
Significant and specific budget for LAG animation activities	2			1	
LAGs setting selection criteria and defining calls					
Better knowledge and support so LAGs can use Simplified Cost Options		1	1		1
LAGs to act as a 'platform', signposting and brokering support from multiple (third party) sources					
Allocating resources for cooperation to the LAG level					
Greater clarity on LAG level M & E requirements in LEADER		1	2	1	
Better knowledge of and support for LAGs to use different delivery tools				1	
Dedicated EU/national platform for information sharing among LEADER actors			1		

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 9

Levels of Independence and Responsibility

- Status Quo
- Less independence / lower responsibility
- Exisiting independence / lower responsibility
- Much higher in both
- Moderate increase in both
- Don't link the two

- Irish LAGs were more in favour of existing independence and lower responsibility compared to the EU-wide sample (33% vs 8%) and fewer Irish respondents were in favour of moderate increases in both (11% vs 28%).
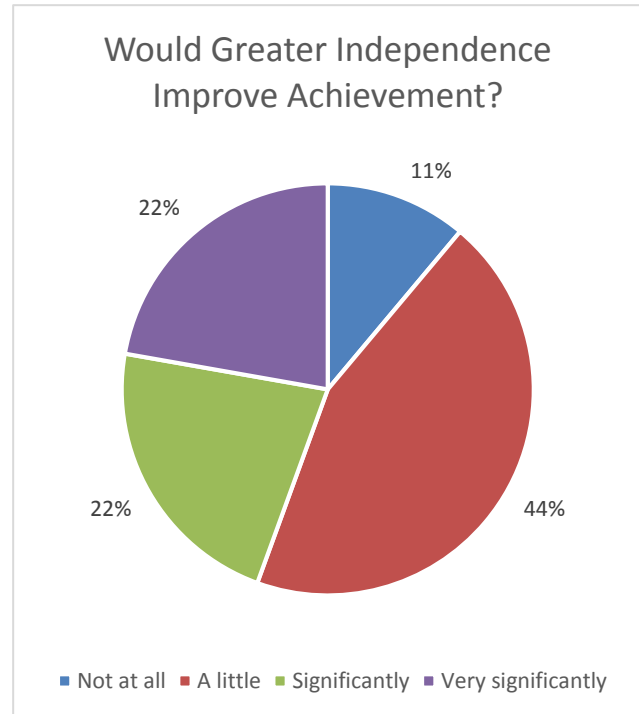
Question 29

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 9

- Fewer Irish LAG respondents (22%) thought that greater independence would improve achievement significantly compared with the EU-wide sample (42%) however more (22% vs 12%) thought it would do so very significantly.

Would Greater Independence Improve Achievement?

11%

22%

22%

44%

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

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 9
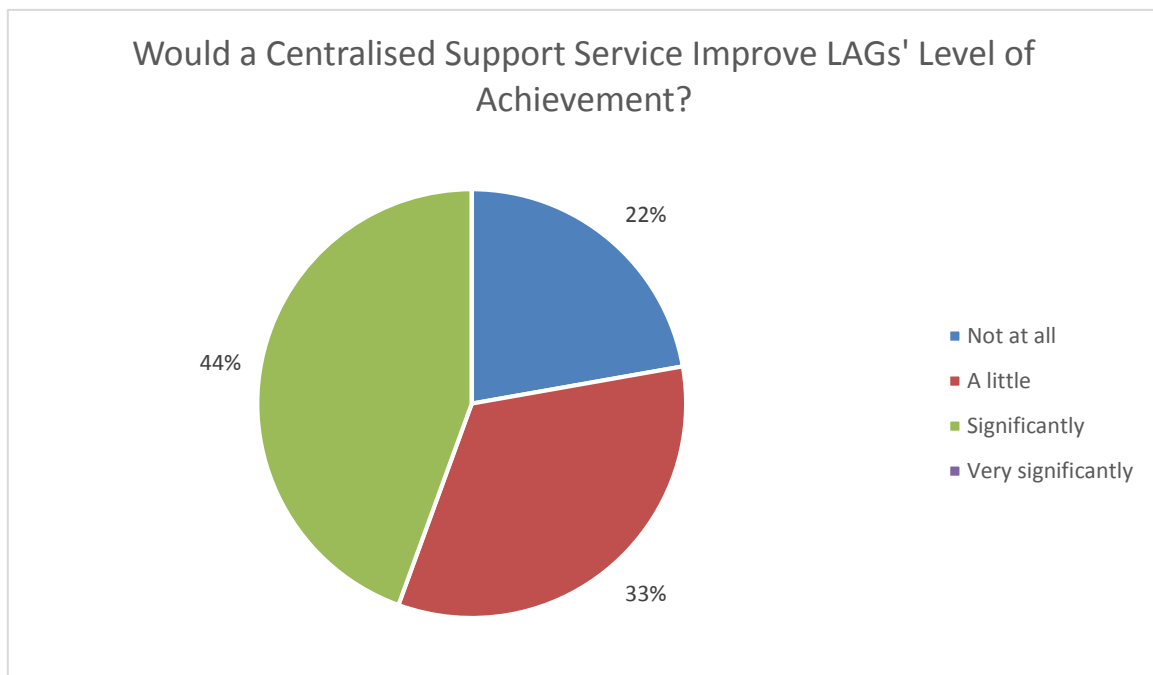
- Compared to the EU-wide sample, more Irish LAGs (44% vs 28%) felt that a centralised support service would improve LAG achievement significantly.
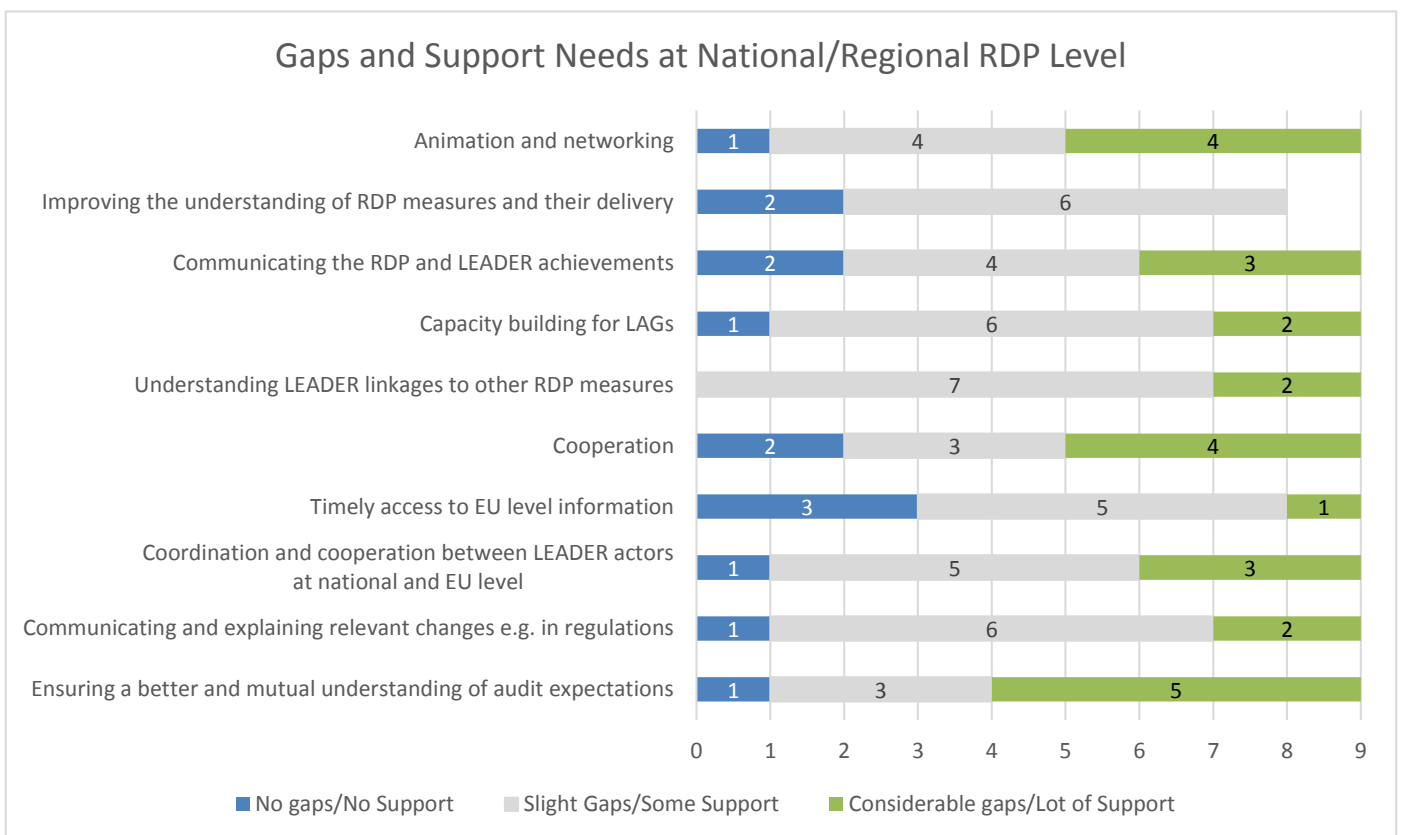
Question 31

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 9

Gaps and Support Needs at National/Regional RDP Level

Funded by the European Commission

- The greatest difference between the Irish and European samples is the greater need for animation and networking support.
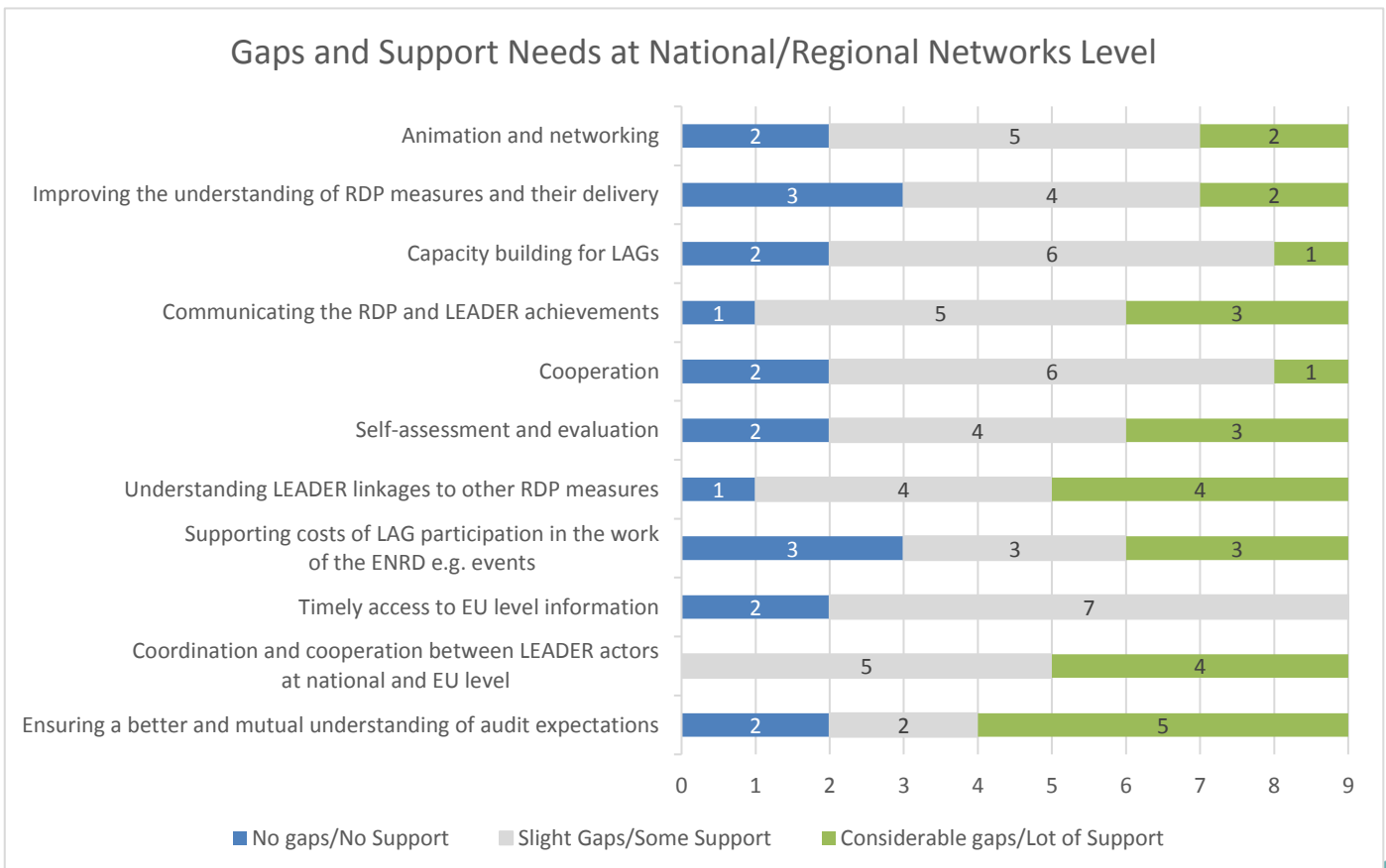
Question 32

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 9

Gaps and Support Needs at National/Regional Networks Level

Category	No gaps/No Support	Slight Gaps/Some Support	Considerable gaps/Lot of Support
Animation and networking	2	5	2
Improving the understanding of RDP measures and their delivery	3	4	2
Capacity building for LAGs	2	6	1
Communicating the RDP and LEADER achievements	1	5	3
Cooperation	2	6	1
Self-assessment and evaluation	2	4	3
Understanding LEADER linkages to other RDP measures	1	4	4
Supporting costs of LAG participation in the work of the ENRD e.g. events	3	3	3
Timely access to EU level information	2	7	
Coordination and cooperation between LEADER actors at national and EU level		5	4
Ensuring a better and mutual understanding of audit expectations	2	2	5

- The gaps and support needs from the networks identified by Irish LAGs are broadly similar to those of the overall sample, there are no significant differences.

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 9
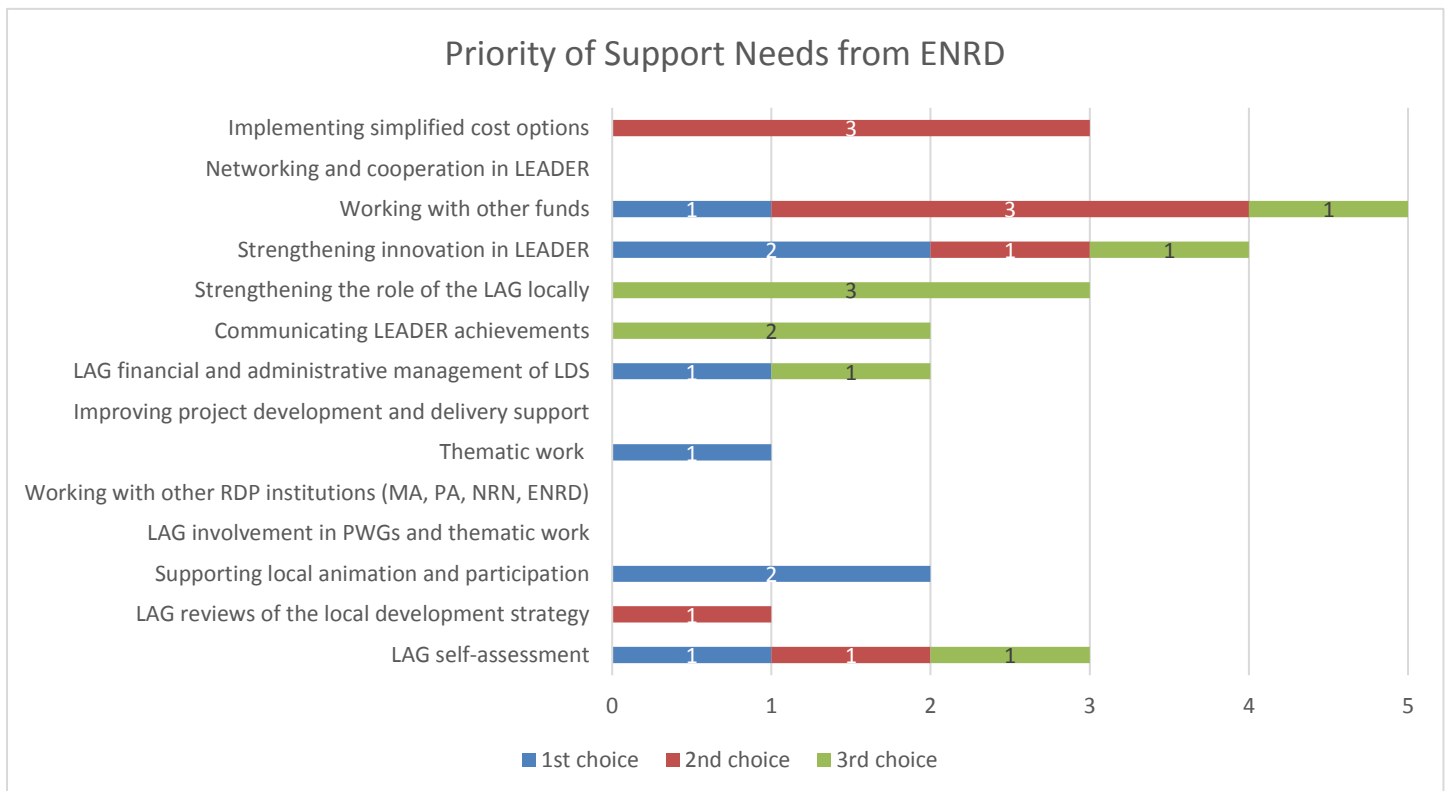
- Working with other funds was top priority for Irish LAGs but third choice for the EU sample.

- Networking and cooperation in LEADER was the joint second most frequently mentioned top 3 priority across the EU but was not mentioned at all by the Irish respondents.

- LAG self-assessment was the third most highly ranked top 3 priority across the Irish sample, whereas across the EU sample it was the least frequently mentioned priority.

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 9


Help to Increase Involvement with ENRD
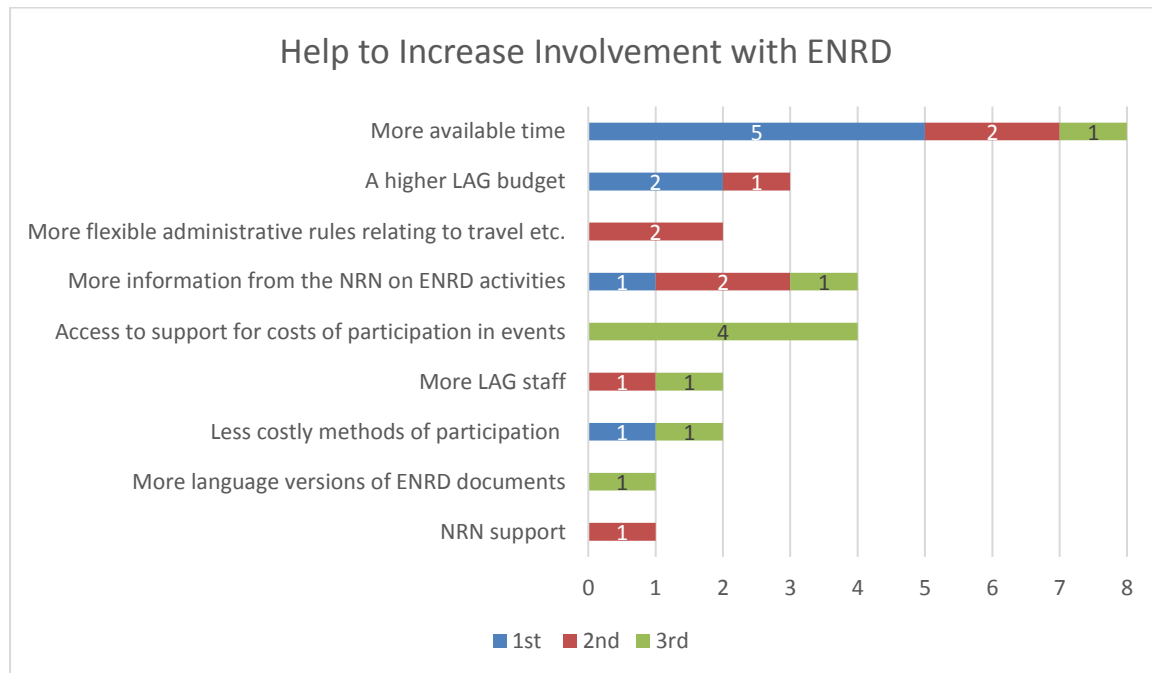
- There were no significant differences between the two samples, a higher proportion of Irish respondents ranked more available time as a top 3 priority whereas more flexible administrative rules for travel was a less frequently ranked priority.

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 9

**Importance of Self-assessment of LDS to Improve LAGs' Operation**
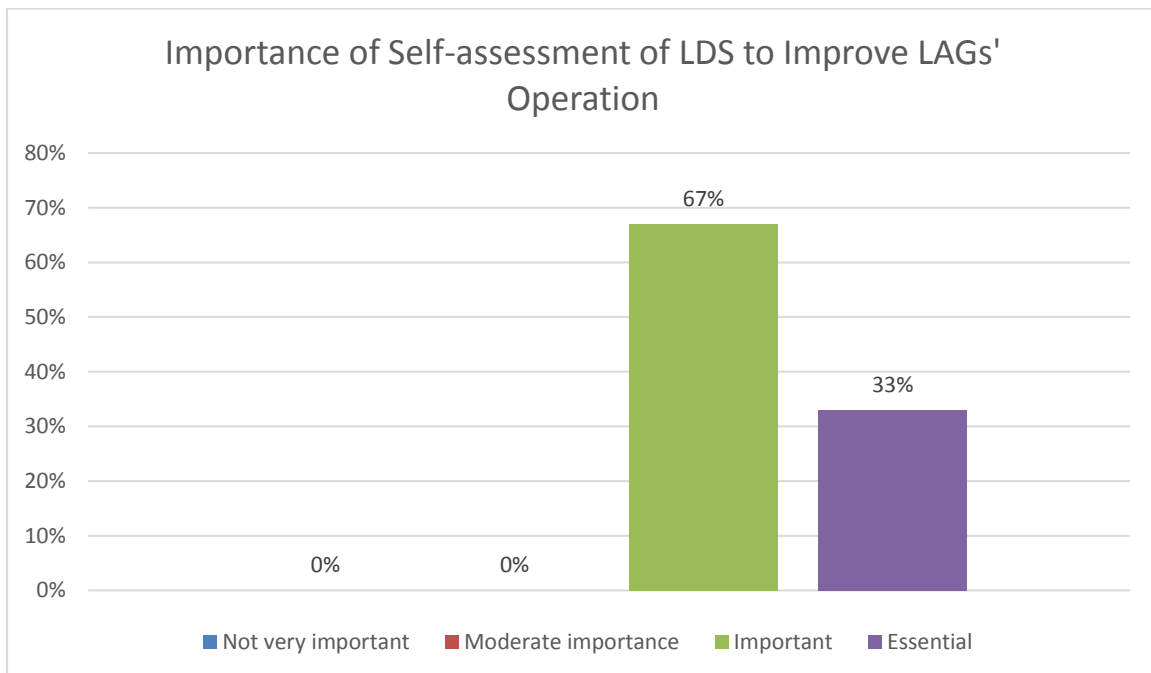
- Compared to the EU-wide sample, Irish respondents placed greater importance on LDS self-assessments, with all respondents stating that it was either important or essential, compared to the EU-wide figure of 71%.

Question 36

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

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

Total Number of Responses 9
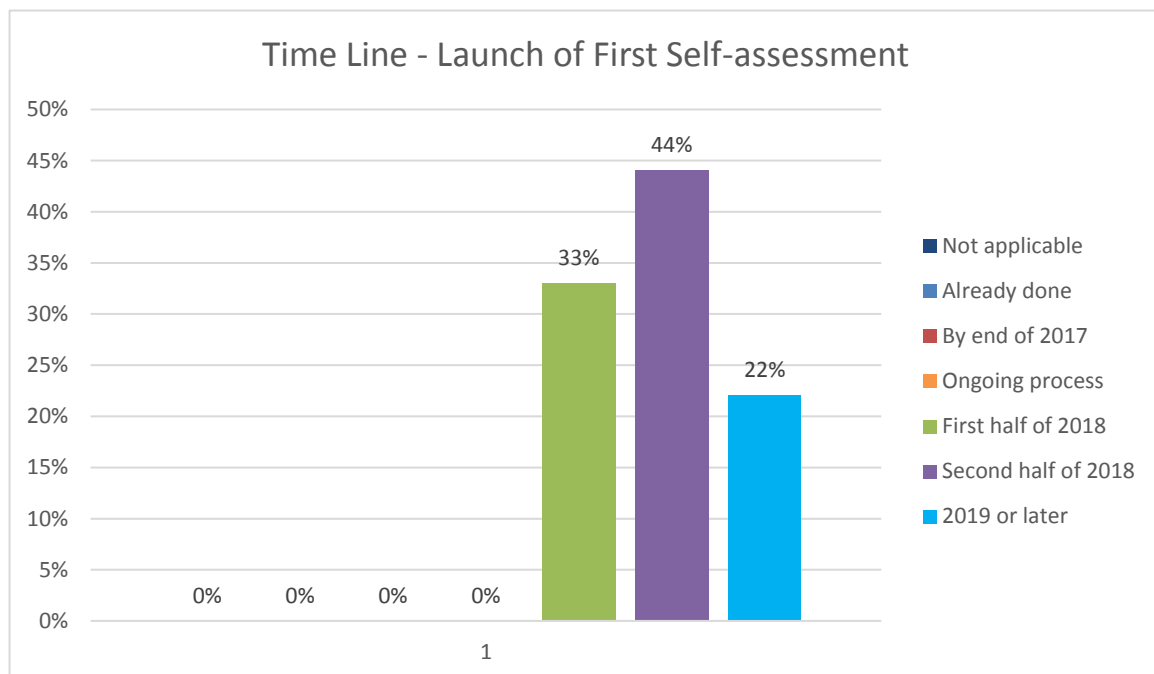
- No Irish LAG had undertaken self assessment by end 2017 vs 22% of the wider sample.   77% of Irish respondents indicated this would be launched in 2018 vs 48% of the EU sample.

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 – 100%
- No – 0%

Total Number of Responses 9