LEADER LAG Survey 2017

Working Paper

Findings at Member State level

Member State: Romania

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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

- Romania (RO)
- 19 LAGs responded, representing 2.7% of total LAG responses
- 8% of Romanian LAGs responded to the survey

Total Number of Responses 19

Question 2

Please select your Rural Development Programme (RDP)

- RO has one national RDP.

Total Number of Responses 19

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 19

- The responses from Romania were in line with the EU sample. There were no responses from RO LAG Board Members.

Respondents' Position

5%

26%

68%

- LAG Manager - Other LAG Staff
- LAG Chair/ President - LAG Board Member
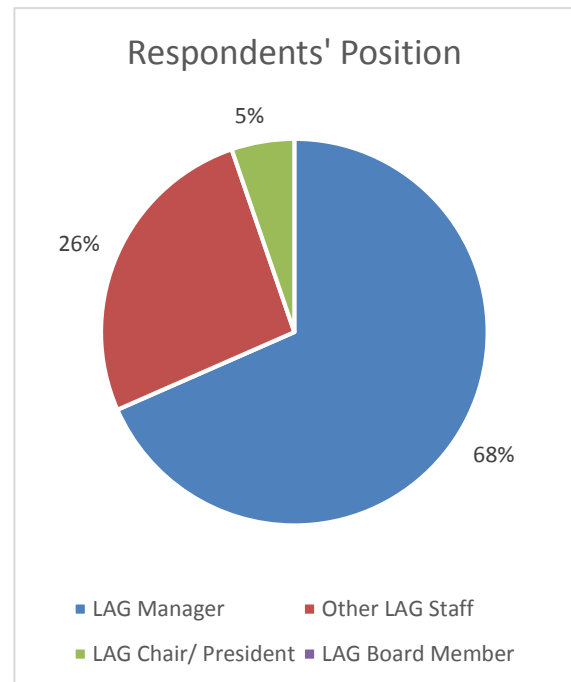
Question 7

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)
- 2007-2013 Programming Period
- LEADER+
- LEADER II
- LEADER I

Total Number of Responses 19

- All responding LAGs from Romania were newly established LAGs (2014-202) or became operational in the programming period 2007-2013. In comparison, 22% and 34% respectively of the EU sample originated from the same period.

First Period LAG became Operational

37%

63%

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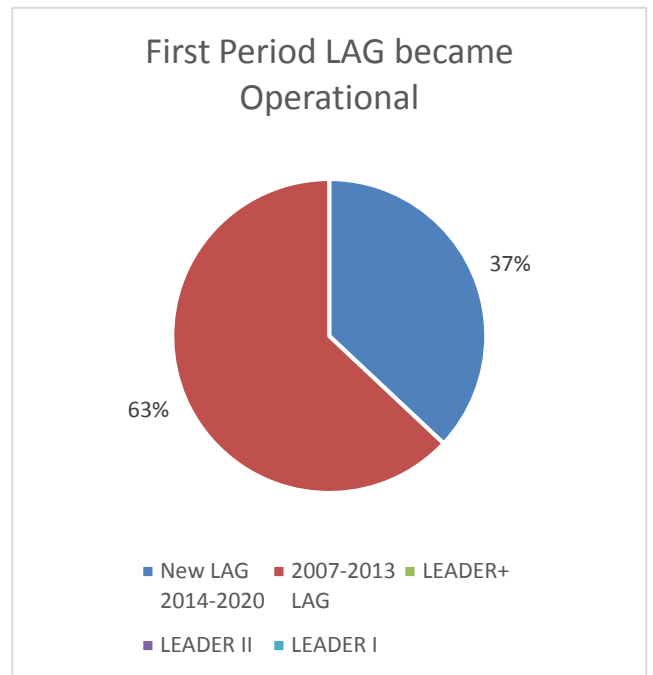
Question 8

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 19
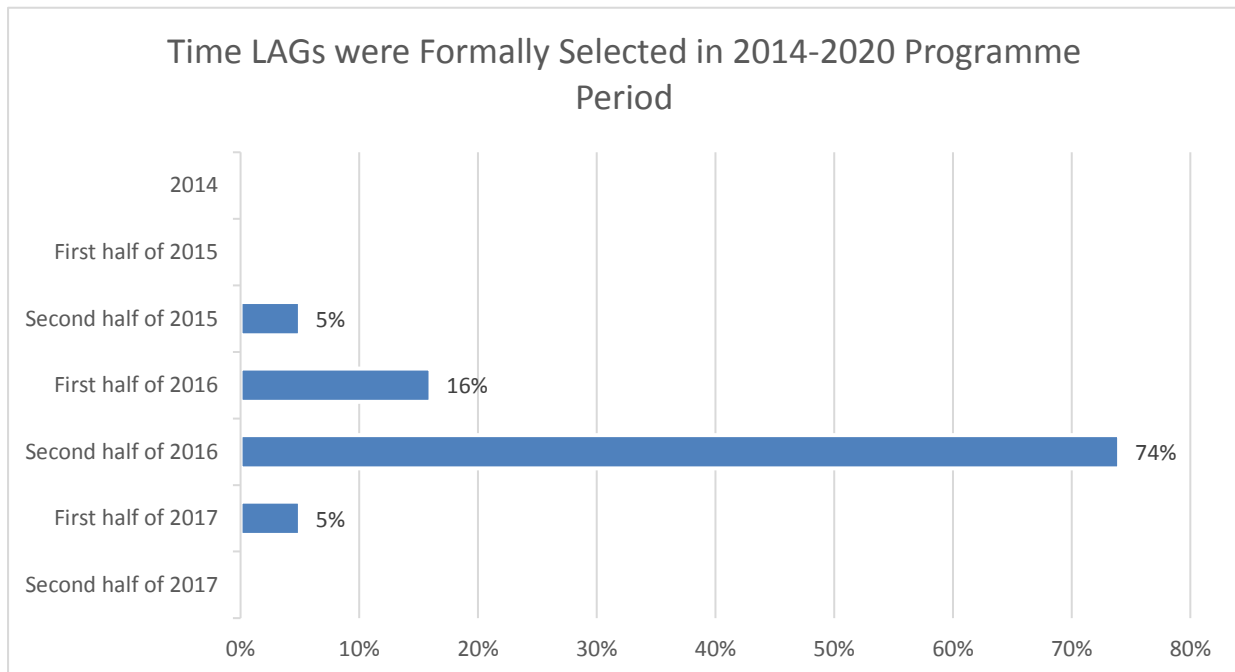
- By the end of 2015, only 5% of responding LAGs from Romania were formally selected, in comparison to 59% of the EU sample.

- Almost three quarters (74%) of Romanian LAGs were formally selected in the second half of 2016, in contrast to only 17% at the EU level.

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 19

Timing of LAGs Launch of First Call for Projects

Category	Value
First half of 2015	
Second half of 2015	
First half of 2016	
Second half of 2016	
First half of 2017	26%
Second half of 2017	74%
2018	
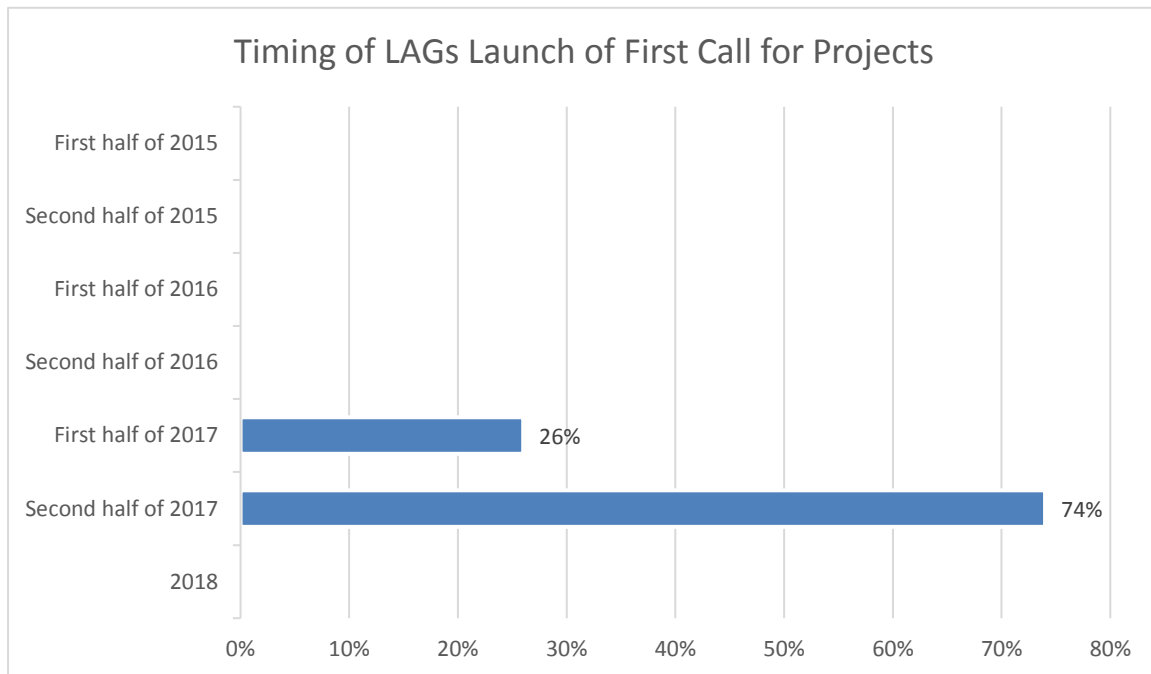
- None of the responding LAGS in Romania launched a project call before 2017, in comparison to 67% of the EU sample.

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)

It should be noted that the percentages sum up to more than 100% reflecting LAGs use of multiple funds.

Total Number of Responses 19

LAG Use of ESI Funds in addition to EAFRD
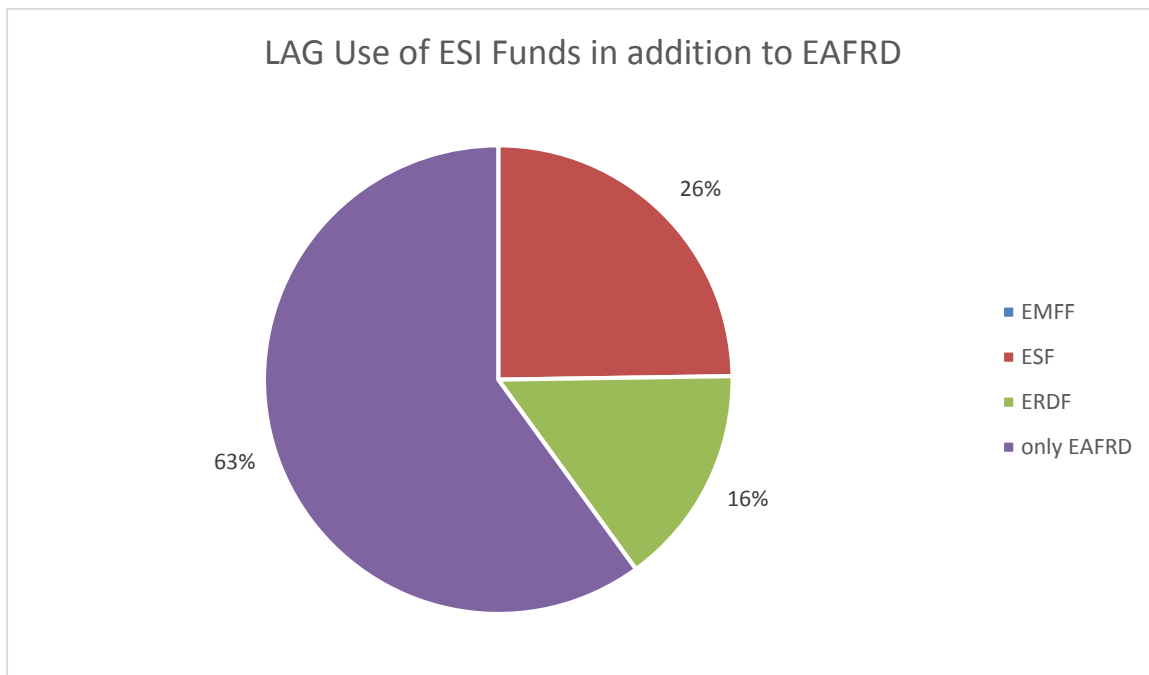
- A higher percentage of responding Romanian LAGs use ESF (26%) in comparison to the EU sample (16%), a smaller proportion use ERDF (16% vs 25%). None of the responding Romanian LAGs used EMFF, in comparison to 9% in the EU sample.

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 19

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
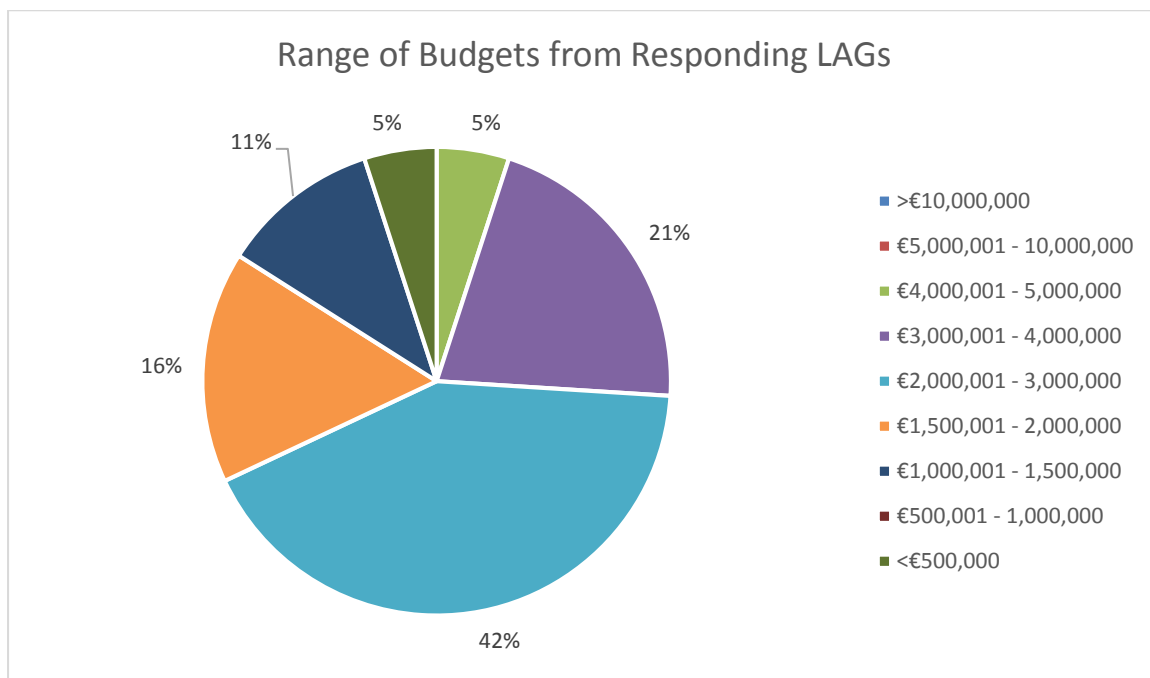
- The budgets from responding Romanian LAGs were smaller than those of the EU sample. None of the responding LAGs in Romania had budgets over €5m in comparison to 15% of LAGs from the EU sample.

- The budget range of €2m- €3m was the most dominant among respondents from Romania representing 42% of the total compared to 22% in the EU 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 19

- Responding Romanian LAGs had a much higher proportion allocating 17 - 20% of their budget on animation and running costs (68% vs 33%) than the EU sample.

- A smaller proportion of responding Romanian LAGs allocated 21 – 25% of their budget on animation and running costs, in comparison with 31% in the EU sample.

% of LAG Budget Spent on Animation & Running Costs

11% 11%
11%
68%

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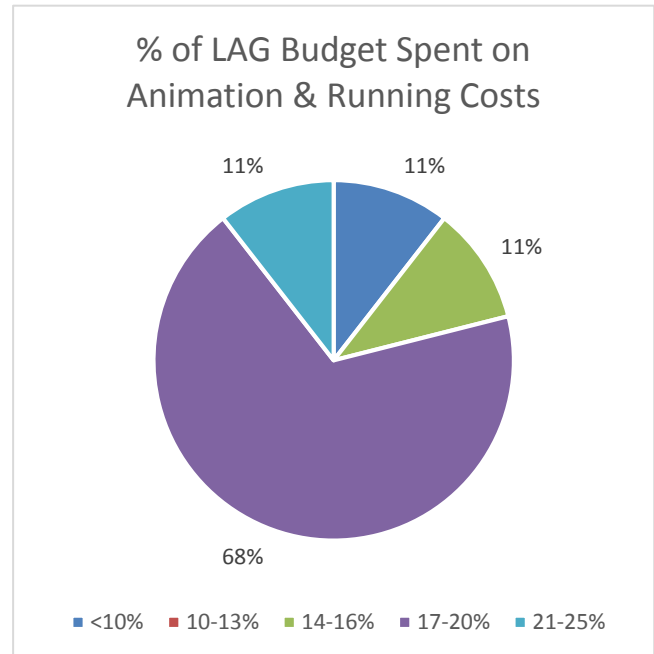
LEADER Principles

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 16

Relative Importance of LEADER Principles
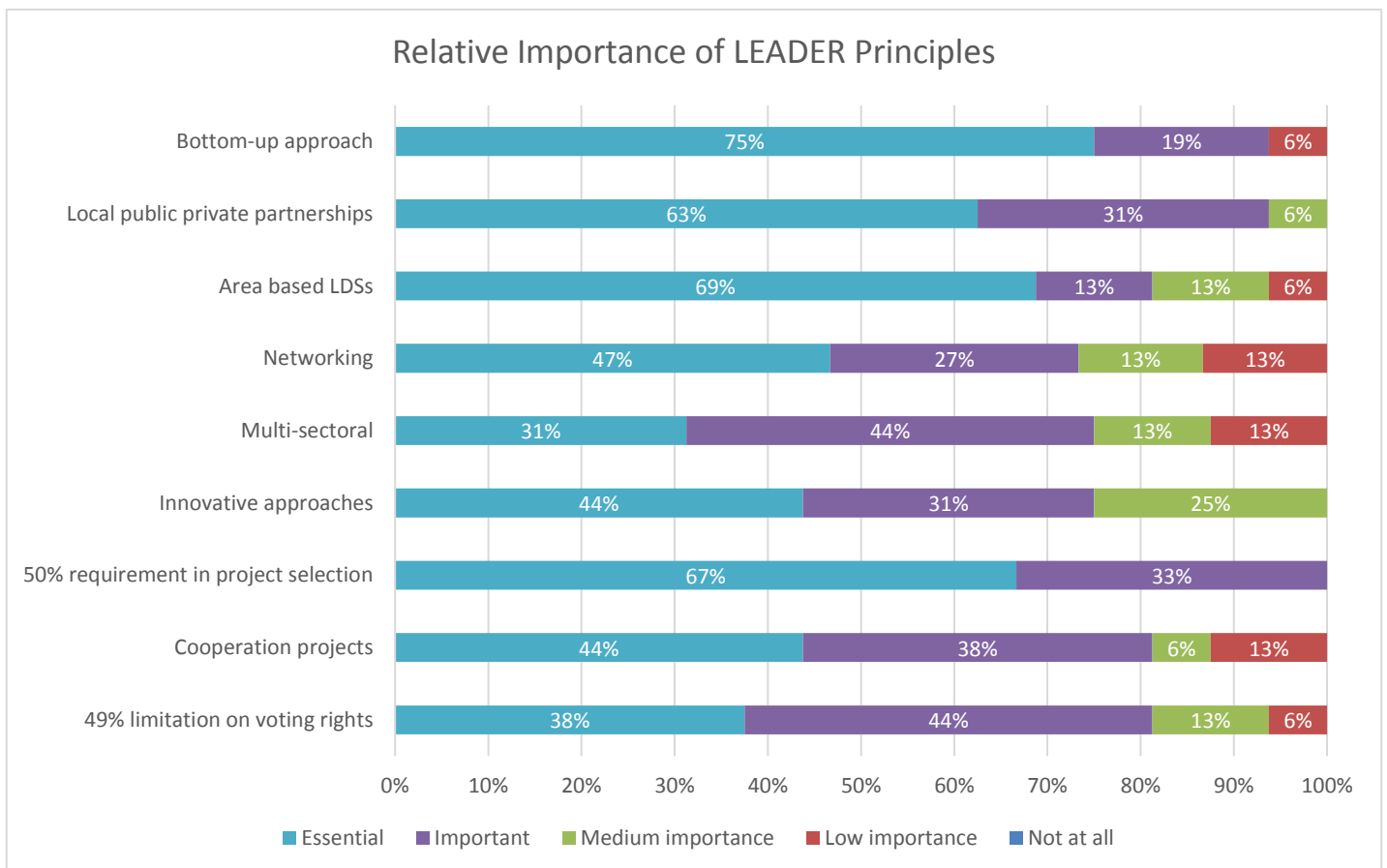
- Overall the responding Romanian LAGs rated the LEADER principles of markedly higher importance than the EU sample with the marginal exception of Networking, similarly the essential ratings are also higher other than for Multi-sectoral.

- The 50% requirement in project selection was considered essential or important by 100% of responding Romanian LAGs, in comparison with 64% in the EU sample. 67% thought it essential vs 34% of the EU sample.

- Similarly the 49% limitation on voting rights was rated essential or important by 82% of responding Romanian LAGs, compared to 53% in 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.
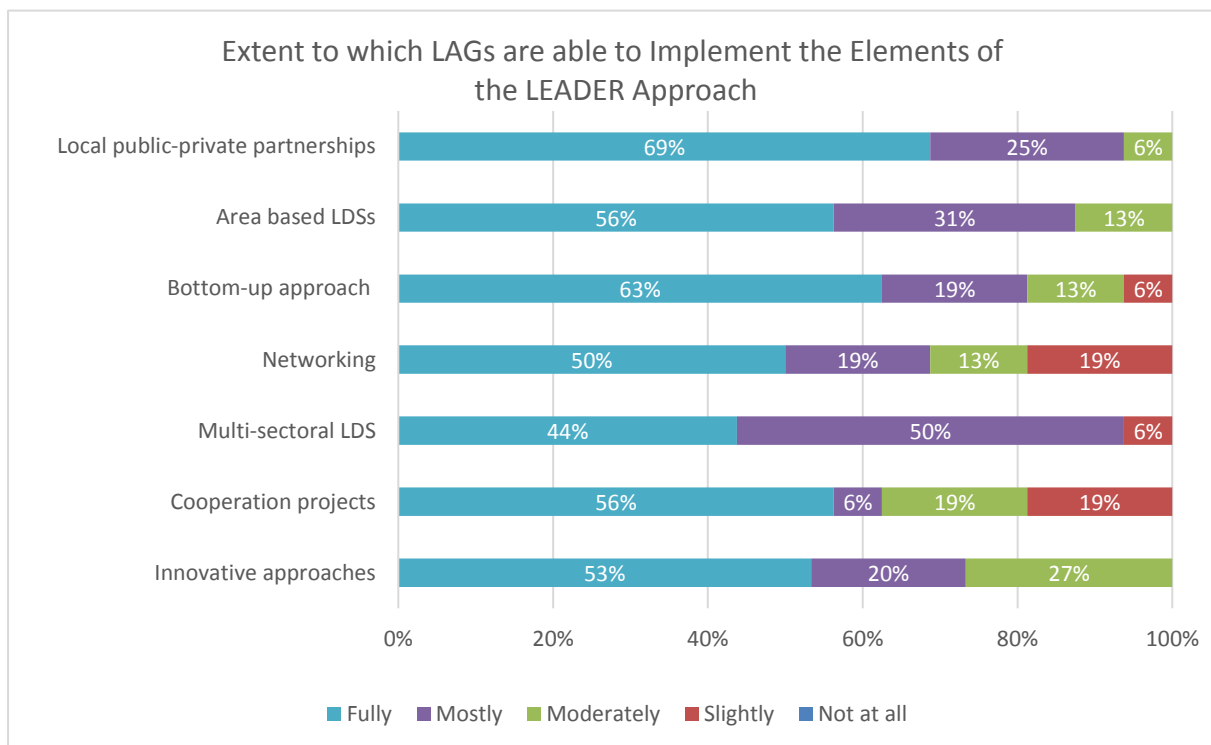- Networking of local partnerships.

Total Number of Responses 16

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

- Overall Romanian LAGs responding reported that they found most of the LEADER approach elements easier to implement (i.e. fully or mostly) than did other European LAGs. This included particularly:
    - Multi-sectoral LDS (94% vs 69%)
    - Innovative approaches (83% vs 54%)

- They also tended to report that they could fully implement the elements to a greater extent.

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 16

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	75%	6%	
LAG is able to use qualitative criteria & local knowledge for project selection decisions	100%		
Admin & reporting requirements limit LAG's capacity for animation & local development	56%	19%	
LAG has overall control of setting selection criteria & defining calls for projects	88%		
LAG funding for the animation of local stakeholders & networking is sufficient.	63%	37%	
Implementation procedures are able to meet local development needs in a flexible, innovative way	75%	19%	
Eligibility conditions for LEADER beneficiaries are appropriate & proportionate to support sought	75%		
Project application procedure is accessible & encourage local stakeholders to participate in LEADER	81%	13%	
Decision-making power of LAGs is not overly limited by RDP level procedures & regulations	56%	38%	
Project holders` ability to implement LEADER projects is not overly constrained by bureaucracy & admin burden	31%	56%	

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

- The responses from the Romanian LAGs were generally stronger than the EU sample in the extent of their agreement with the survey statements.

- Romanian respondents agreed more strongly with the following aspects than did the EU sample:
  o Project application procedure is accessible (81% vs 33%)
  o LAG is able to use qualitative criteria and local knowledge for project selection decisions' (100% vs 84%)
  o Eligibility conditions for LEADER beneficiaries are appropriate & proportionate to support sought (75% vs 39%)
  o Decision making power of LAGs is not overly limited by RDP level procedures and regulations.
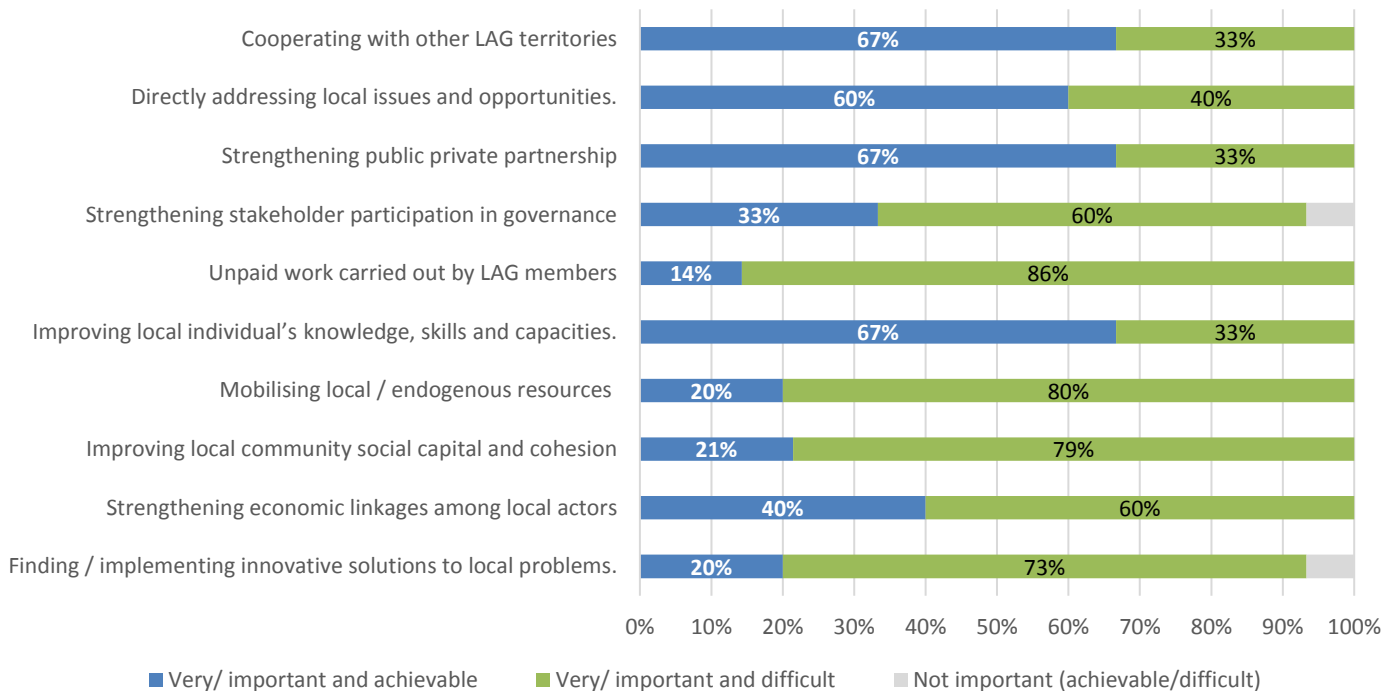
Question 16

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 15

Importance and Achievability of LEADER Effects

Effect	Very/ important and achievable	Very/ important and difficult	Not important (achievable/difficult)
Cooperating with other LAG territories	67%	33%	
Directly addressing local issues and opportunities.	60%	40%	
Strengthening public private partnership	67%	33%	
Strengthening stakeholder participation in governance	33%	60%	
Unpaid work carried out by LAG members	14%	86%	
Improving local individual's knowledge, skills and capacities.	67%	33%	
Mobilising local / endogenous resources	20%	80%	
Improving local community social capital and cohesion	21%	79%	
Strengthening economic linkages among local actors	40%	60%	
Finding / implementing innovative solutions to local problems.	20%	73%	

- Although the pattern of responses was broadly similar to the wider sample Romanian respondents were rather more polarised regarding which LEADER effects were 'very/important and achievable' and 'very important and difficult'.

- The effect for which a significantly greater proportion of Romanian than EU LAGs said it was very/important and achievable was:
  - Improving individual's knowledge, skills and capacities – 67%% of Romanian LAGs compared to 48% in the EU sample.

- The effects for which a significantly greater proportion of Romanian than EU LAGs said that effects were very/important and difficult were:
  - Unpaid work carried out by LAG members (86% vs 31%).
  - Mobilising local/endogenous resources (80% vs 56%).
  - Improving local community social capital and cohesion (79% vs 56%).
  - Strengthening stakeholder participation in governance (60% vs 42%).
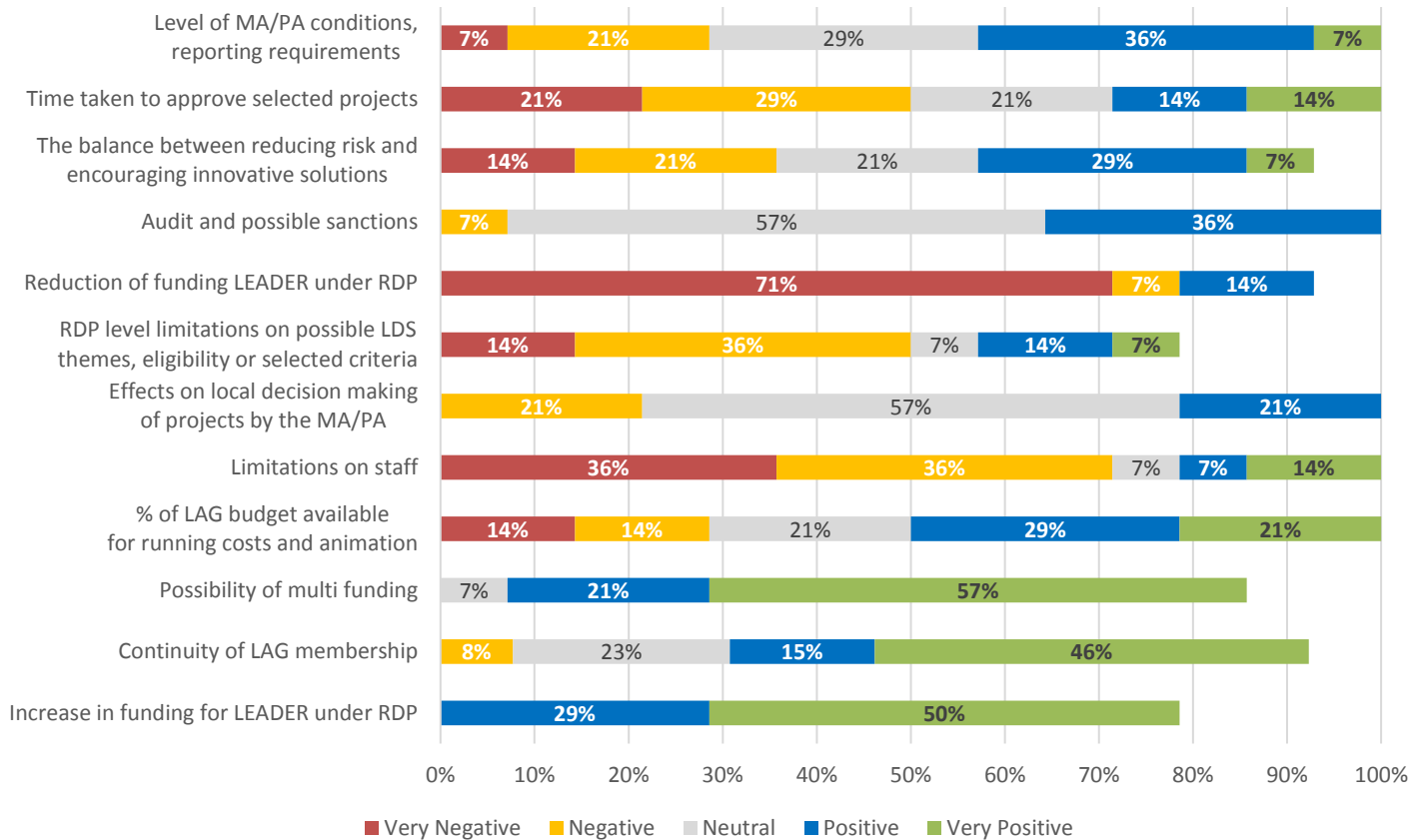
LEADER Operation

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 14

Level of Effects on LEADER Implementation

	Very Negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very Positive
Level of MA/PA conditions, reporting requirements	7%	21%	29%	36%	7%
Time taken to approve selected projects	21%	29%	21%	14%	14%
The balance between reducing risk and encouraging innovative solutions	14%	21%	21%	29%	7%
Audit and possible sanctions		7%	57%	36%	
Reduction of funding LEADER under RDP	71%	7%		14%	
RDP level limitations on possible LDS themes, eligibility or selected criteria	14%	36%	7%	14%	7%
Effects on local decision making of projects by the MA/PA		21%	57%	21%	
Limitations on staff	36%	36%	7%	7%	14%
% of LAG budget available for running costs and animation	14%	14%	21%	29%	21%
Possibility of multi funding			7%	21%	57%
Continuity of LAG membership		8%	23%	15%	46%
Increase in funding for LEADER under RDP				29%	50%

For the purposes of improving the clarity of the analysis the 'not applicable' responses have been removed from the chart.
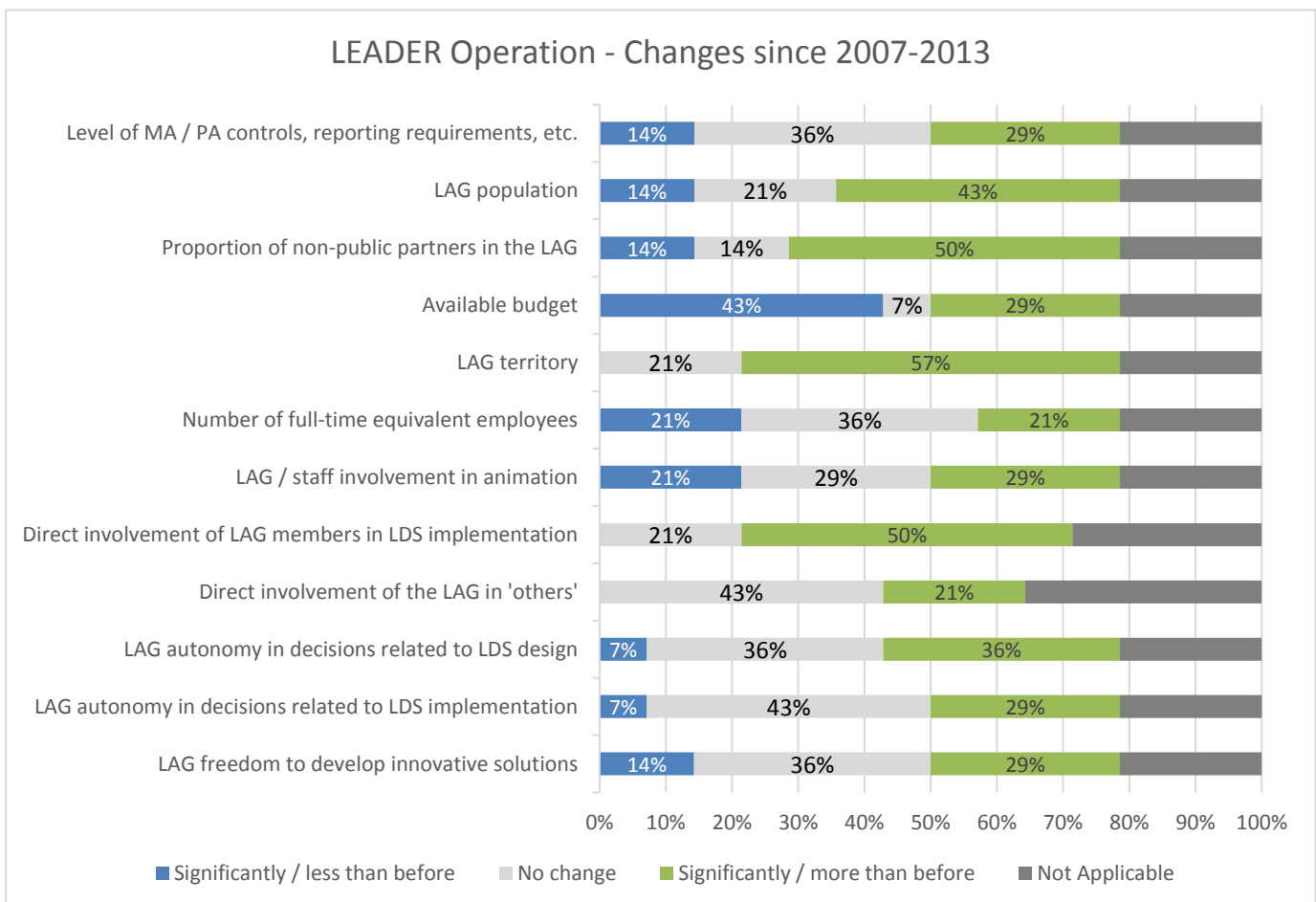
- Overall LAGs in Romania reported less negative factors on LEADER implementation than the EU sample.

- Audit and possible sanctions, only 7% of responding Romanian LAGs reported this as negative, in comparison to 56% of the EU sample. The balance between reducing risk and encouraging innovative solutions was seen positively or very positively by 36% of Romanian LAGs, in comparison to 9% of the EU sample.

- The level of MA/PA conditions, reporting requirements was seen to be negative or very negative by only 28% of responding Romanian LAGs, compared to 72% of the EU sample.

- 78% of responding Romanian LAGs reported the effect of the reduction of funding LEADER under RDP as negative or very negative, compared to 55% of the EU sample. Limitations on staff was a bigger negative in Romania than elsewhere, 72% of Romanians responding were negative / very negative as opposed to 40% of the EU sample.

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 14

LEADER Operation - Changes since 2007-2013

| Aspect	Significantly / less than before	No change	Significantly / more than before	Not Applicable
Level of MA / PA controls, reporting requirements, etc.	14%	36%	29%	
LAG population	14%	21%	43%	
Proportion of non-public partners in the LAG	14%	14%	50%	
Available budget	43%	7%	29%	
LAG territory		21%	57%	
Number of full-time equivalent employees	21%	36%	21%	
LAG / staff involvement in animation	21%	29%	29%	
Direct involvement of LAG members in LDS implementation	21%		50%	
Direct involvement of the LAG in 'others'		43%	21%	
LAG autonomy in decisions related to LDS design	7%	36%	36%	
LAG autonomy in decisions related to LDS implementation	7%	43%	29%	
LAG freedom to develop innovative solutions	14%	36%	29%	

- Overall the Romanian LAGs reported higher levels of increases (significantly/more than before) than the EU sample. This was particularly notable in the:
  - Direct involvement of LAG members in LDS implementation (50% vs 26%)
  - LAG territory (57% vs 27%)
  - LAG autonomy in decisions relating to LDS design (36% vs 17%)
  - LAG autonomy in decisions relating to LDS implementation (29% vs 17%)
  - LAG freedom to develop innovative solutions (29% vs 14%).

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 13


Activities LAG Staff Spend Most Time On
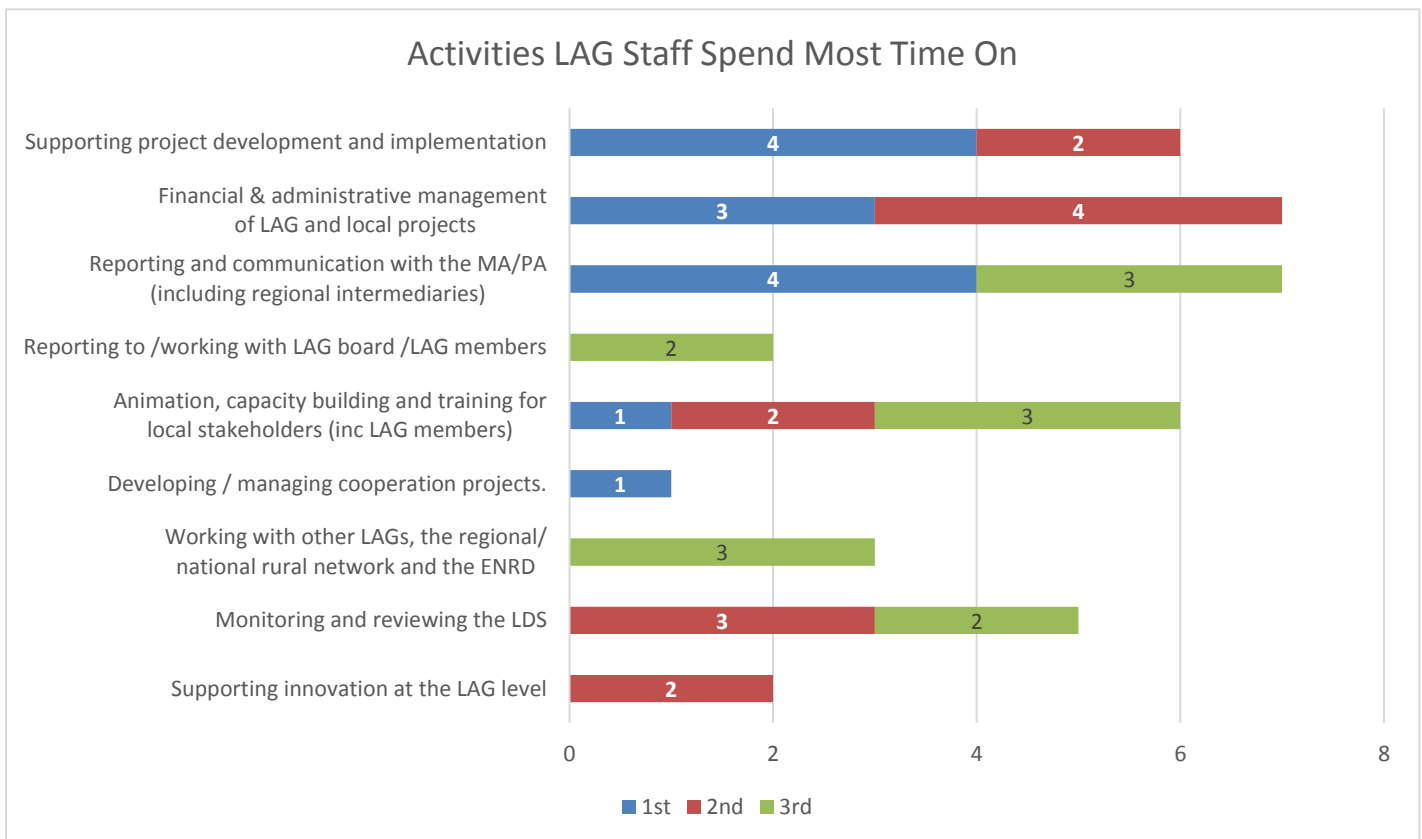
- The responding Romanian LAGs reported spending the most time on the same three activities as the EU sample, in a slightly different order of priority.

- Proportionately the responding Romanian LAGs spent more time on monitoring and reviewing the LDS than the EU sample.

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 12
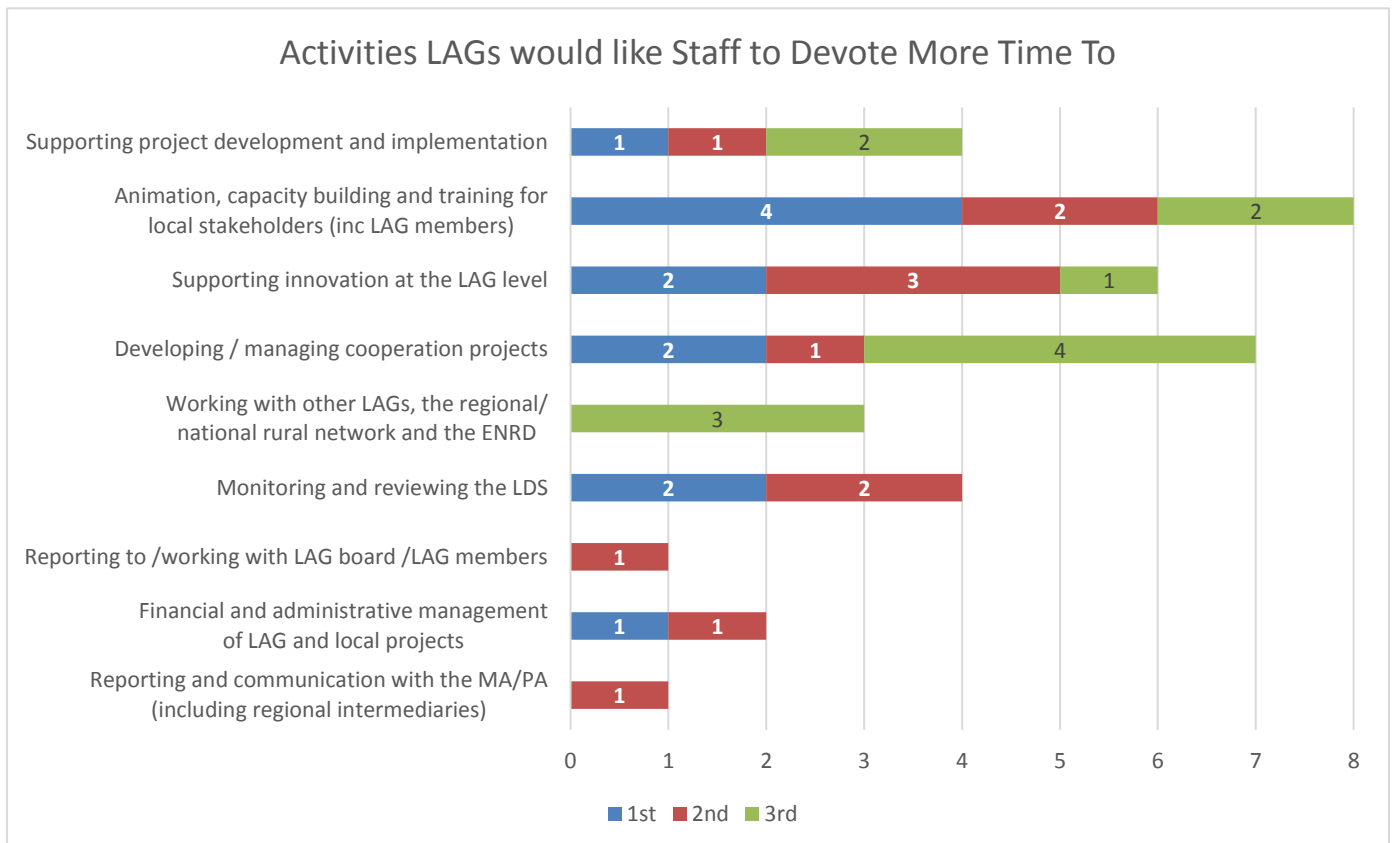
- Romanian LAGs that responded wanted to spend proportionately more time on animation, capacity building and training local stakeholders and developing and managing cooperation projects than the EU sample.

- Proportionately responding Romanian LAGs also wanted to spend more time on monitoring and reviewing the LDS and less time on supporting project development and implementation than the EU sample.

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 13

Importance of Operational Priorities to LAGs
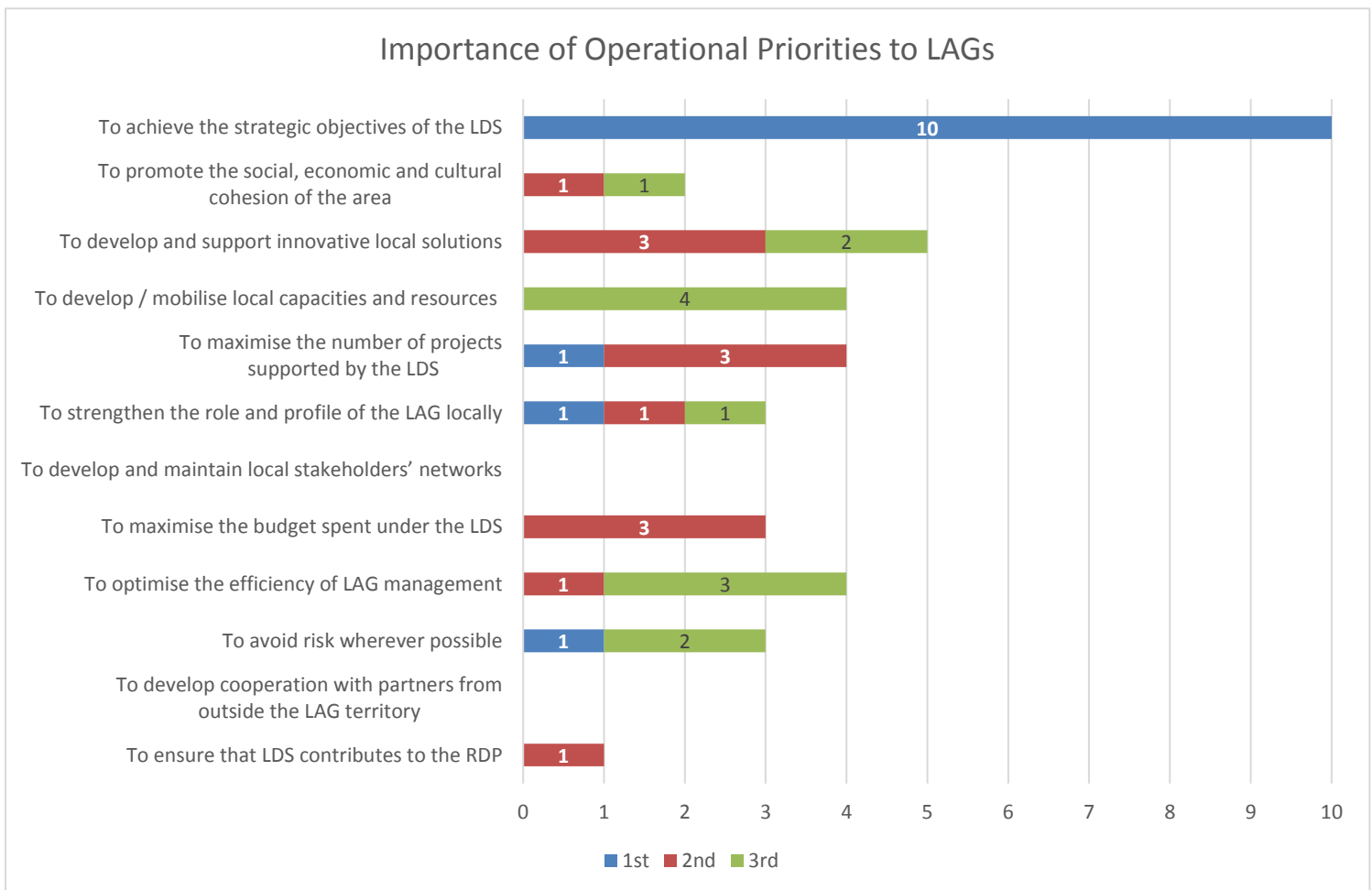
- Proportionately the responding Romanian LAGs rated promoting the social, economic and cultural cohesion of the area lower than the EU sample.

- They also rated both optimising the efficiency of LAG management and avoiding risk wherever possible proportionately higher than did the EU sample.
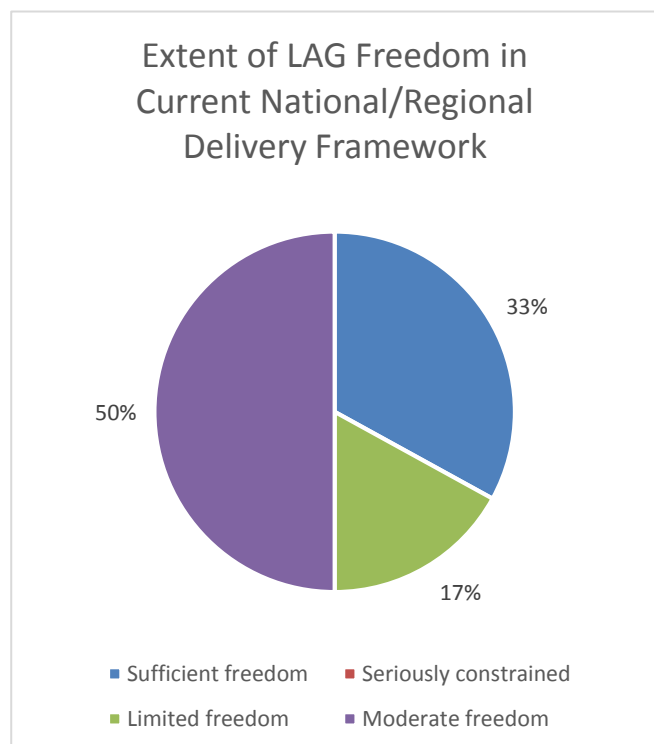
Question 22

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 12

- A higher percentage of responding Romanian LAGs reported having sufficient freedom (33%) than in the EU sample (17%).

- No responding Romanian LAG reported that they were seriously constrained compared to 11% of the EU sample.
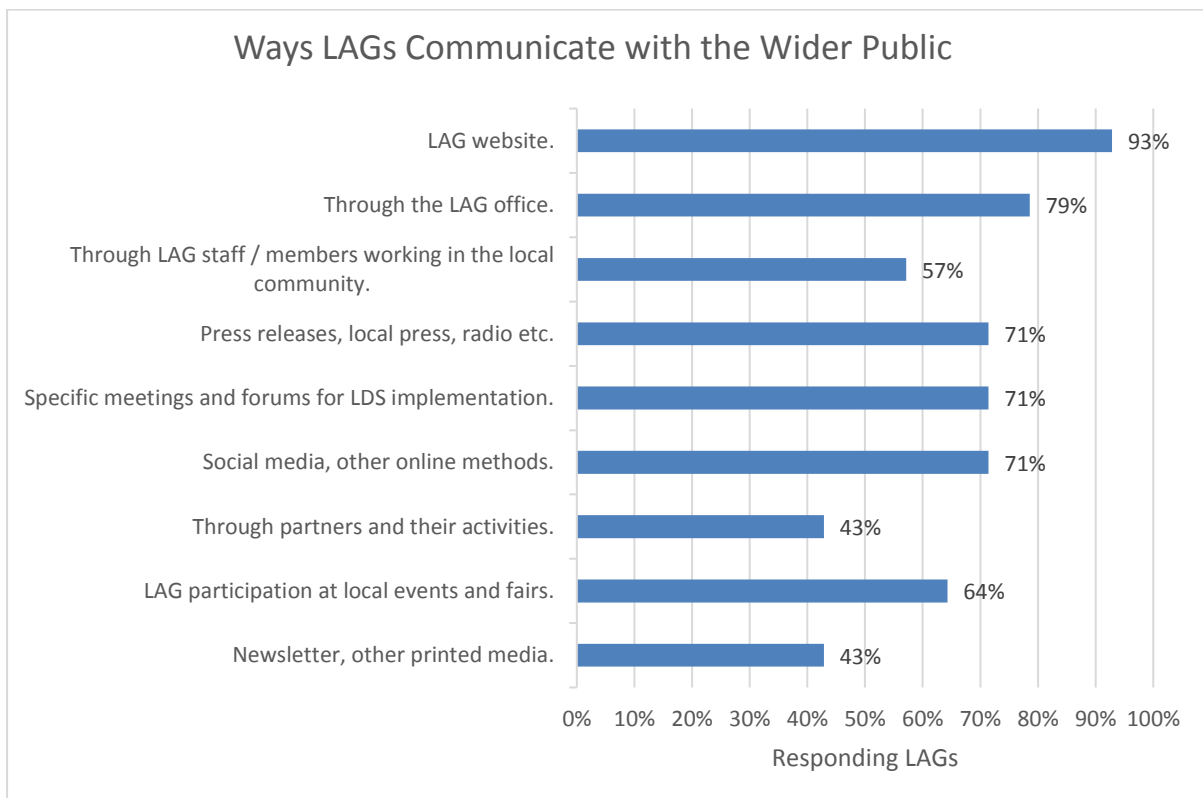
Extent of LAG Freedom in Current National/Regional Delivery Framework

- 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 14

Ways LAGs Communicate with the Wider Public

| Category	%
LAG website.	93%
Through the LAG office.	79%
Through LAG staff / members working in the local community.	57%
Press releases, local press, radio etc.	71%
Specific meetings and forums for LDS implementation.	71%
Social media, other online methods.	71%
Through partners and their activities.	43%
LAG participation at local events and fairs.	64%
Newsletter, other printed media.	43%

Responding LAGs

- Overall responding Romanian LAGs reported slightly greater usage of multiple communication channels, in comparison with the EU sample.

- Responding Romanian LAGs communicated somewhat less through partners and their activities (43% vs 54%) and communicated more though LAG participation at local events and fairs (64% vs 52%) than the EU sample.

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 14


Ways LAGs Receive Information from MA/PA
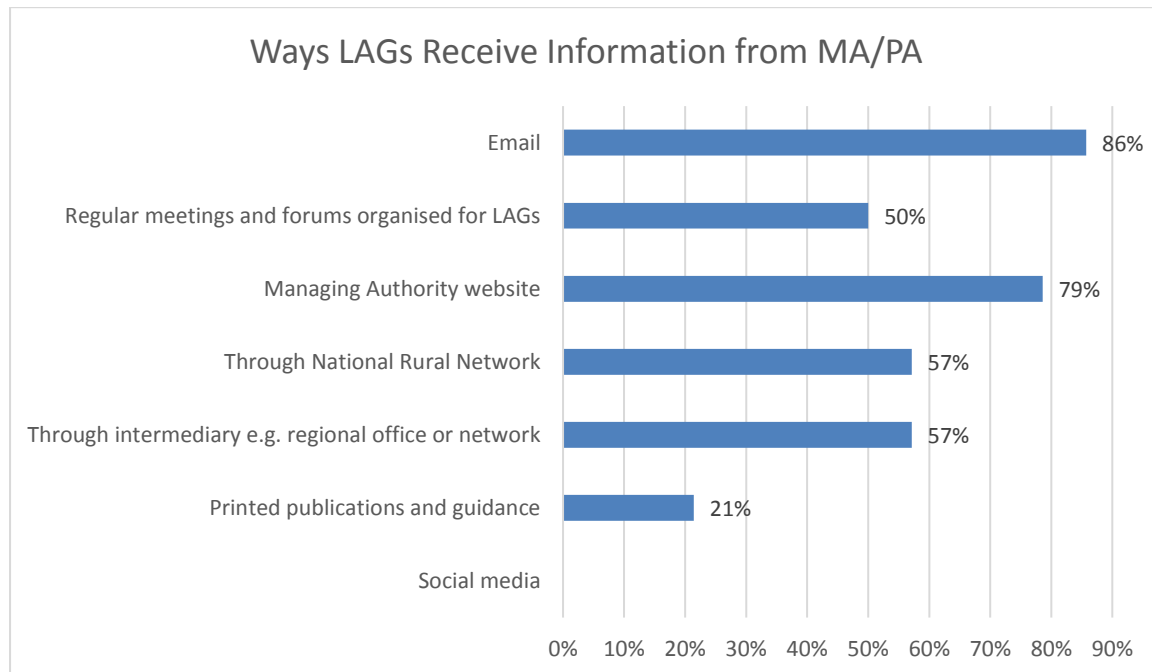
- The responding Romanian LAGs reported a much higher use of the Managing Authority website than the EU sample (79% vs 34%).

- Romanian LAGs also reported receiving more information through the National Rural Network (57%) and intermediaries (57%) than the EU sample (31% and 22% respectively).

- There appeared to be less use made of regular meetings and forums organised for LAGs I(50% vs 68%).

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 13
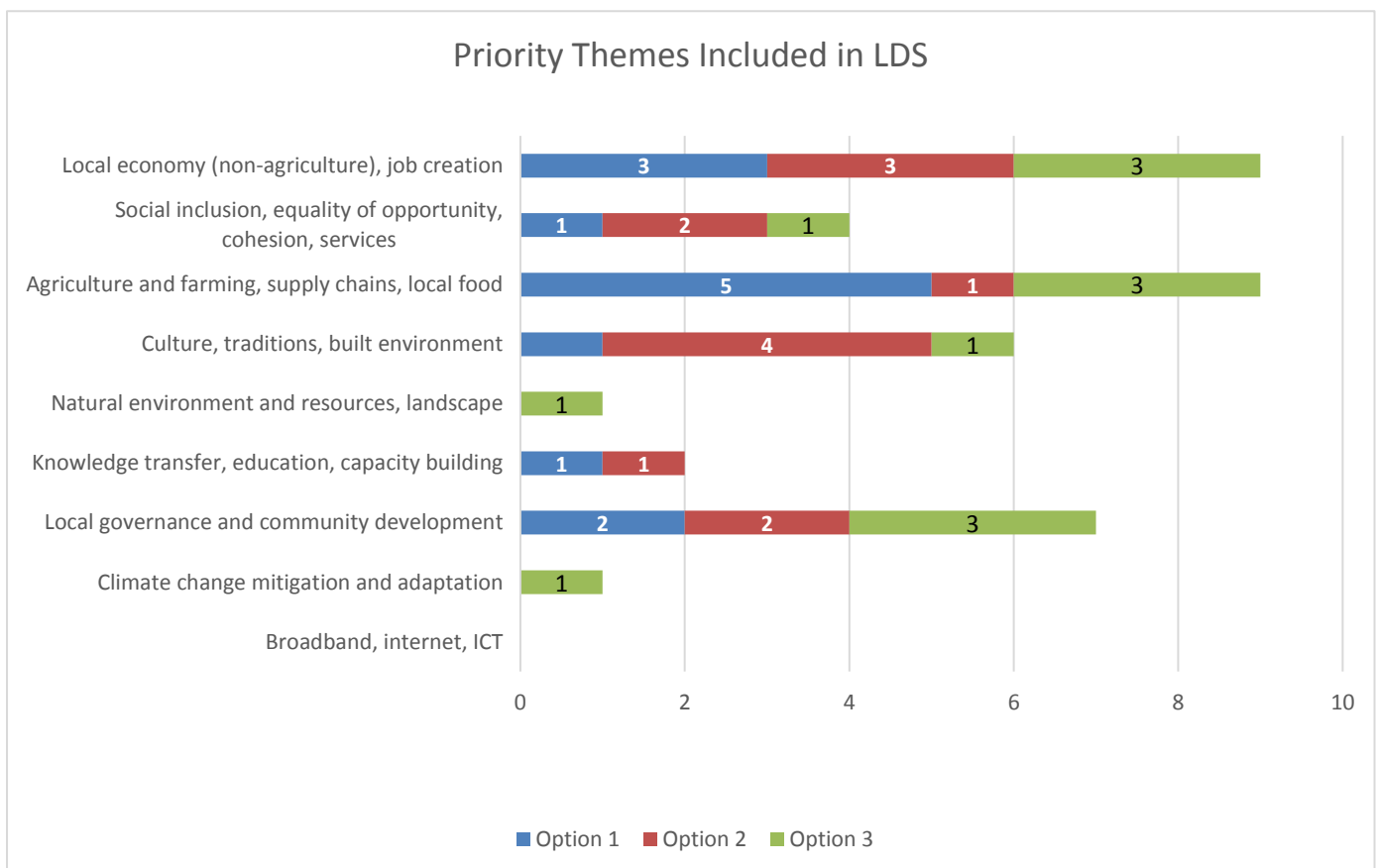
- Romanian LAG responses indicated that social inclusion, equality of opportunity, cohesion, services was a proportionately lower priority theme than the EU sample and that local governance and community development was a higher priority than the EU sample.
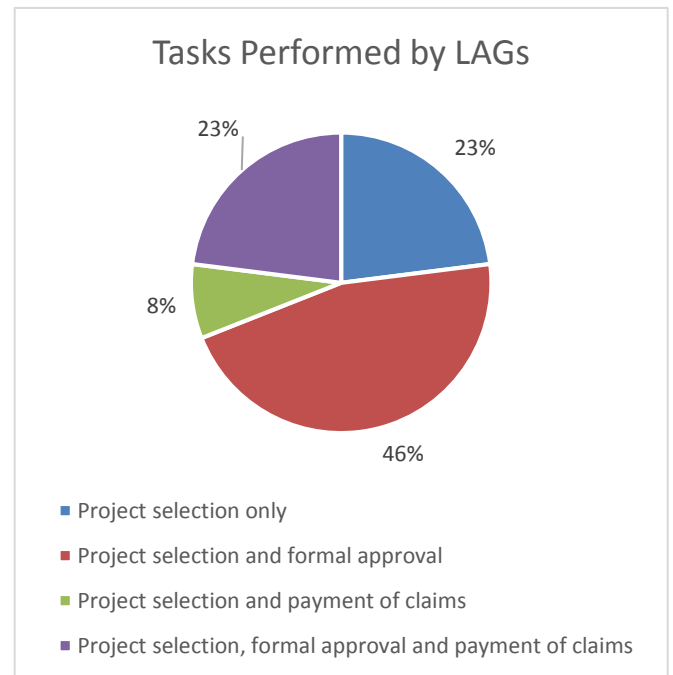
Question 26

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 13

- A larger percentage of Romanian LAGs (46%) reported that they are responsible for project selection and formal approval than in the EU sample where 30% of LAGs perform these tasks.

- In contrast, a markedly smaller proportion of Romanian respondents stated that their LAGs were responsible for project selection only (23%) by comparison with 48% of LAGs in the EU sample.

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
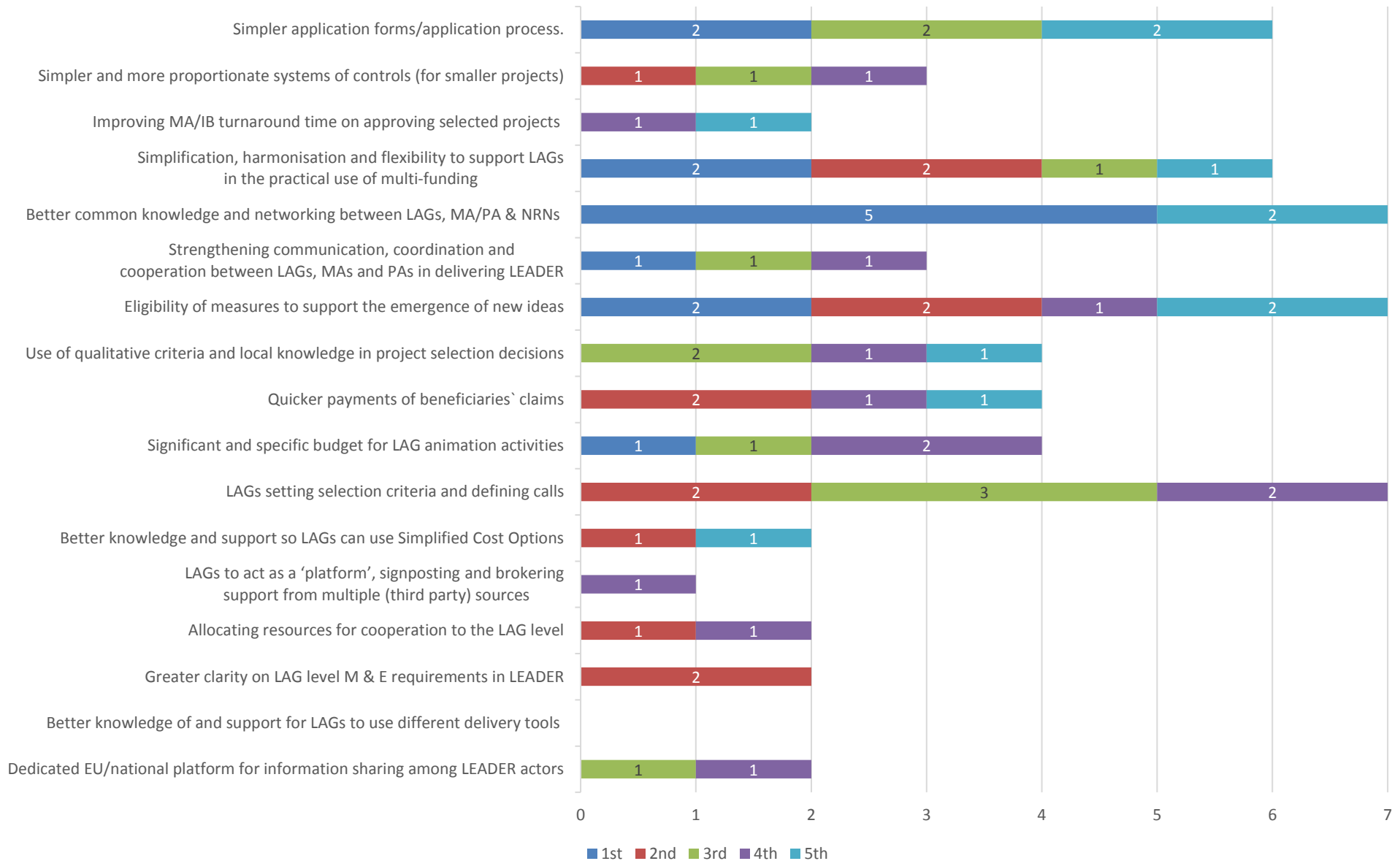
LEADER Improvements

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 13

- Romanian LAGs selected a different top three most important changes from the EU sample.

- Better common knowledge and networking between LAGs, MA/PA & NRNs was ranked most important, the EU sample ranked simpler application forms/application processes first.

- Eligibility of measures to support emergence of new ideas and LAGs setting selection criteria and defining calls were preferred to simpler and more proportionate systems of controls and improving MA/IB approvals turnaround time, the second and third choices in the EU sample.

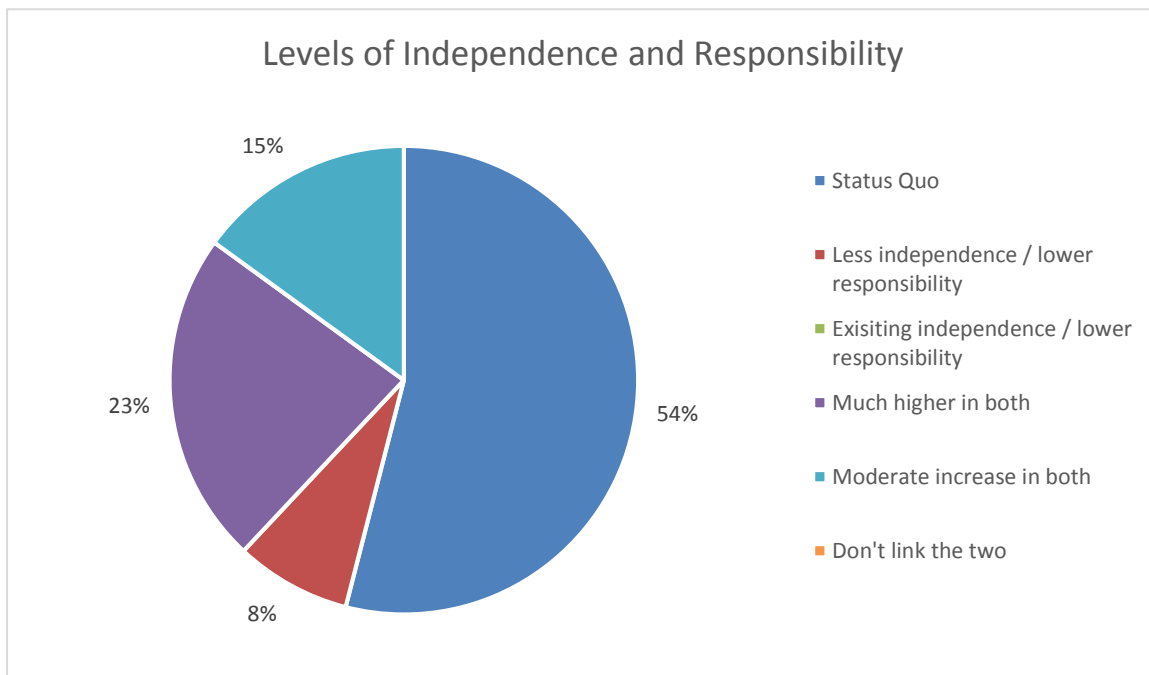Most Important Changes to Improve Implementation Now

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Simpler application forms/application process.	2		2		2
Simpler and more proportionate systems of controls (for smaller projects)		1	1	1	
Improving MA/IB turnaround time on approving selected projects				1	1
Simplification, harmonisation and flexibility to support LAGs in the practical use of multi-funding	2	2	1		1
Better common knowledge and networking between LAGs, MA/PA & NRNs	5				2
Strengthening communication, coordination and cooperation between LAGs, MAs and PAs in delivering LEADER	1		1	1	
Eligibility of measures to support the emergence of new ideas	2	2		1	2
Use of qualitative criteria and local knowledge in project selection decisions			2	1	1
Quicker payments of beneficiaries` claims		2		1	1
Significant and specific budget for LAG animation activities	1		1	2	
LAGs setting selection criteria and defining calls		2	3	2	
Better knowledge and support so LAGs can use Simplified Cost Options		1			1
LAGs to act as a 'platform', signposting and brokering support from multiple (third party) sources				1	
Allocating resources for cooperation to the LAG level		1		1	
Greater clarity on LAG level M & E requirements in LEADER		2			
Better knowledge of and support for LAGs to use different delivery tools					
Dedicated EU/national platform for information sharing among LEADER actors			1	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 – 13

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

- The major difference is that a much higher percentage of Romanian LAGs responding were satisfied with maintaining the 'status quo' than in the EU sample (54% vs 20%).

- There was a more moderate appetite for increased responsibility than in the wider sample (38% vs 47%).

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 13

- Romanian LAGs responded in a very similar way to the EU sample in regard to whether greater independence would improve achievement.

Would Greater Independence Improve Achievement?

- 8%
- 15%
- 31%
- 46%

Legend: ■ Not at all ■ A little ■ Significantly ■ Very significantly
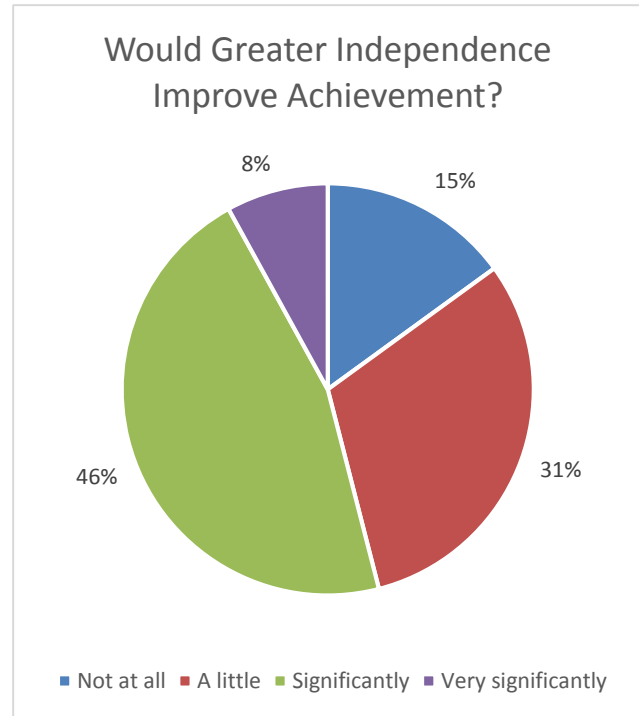
Question 30

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 13

Would a Centralised Support Service Improve LAGs' Level of Achievement?
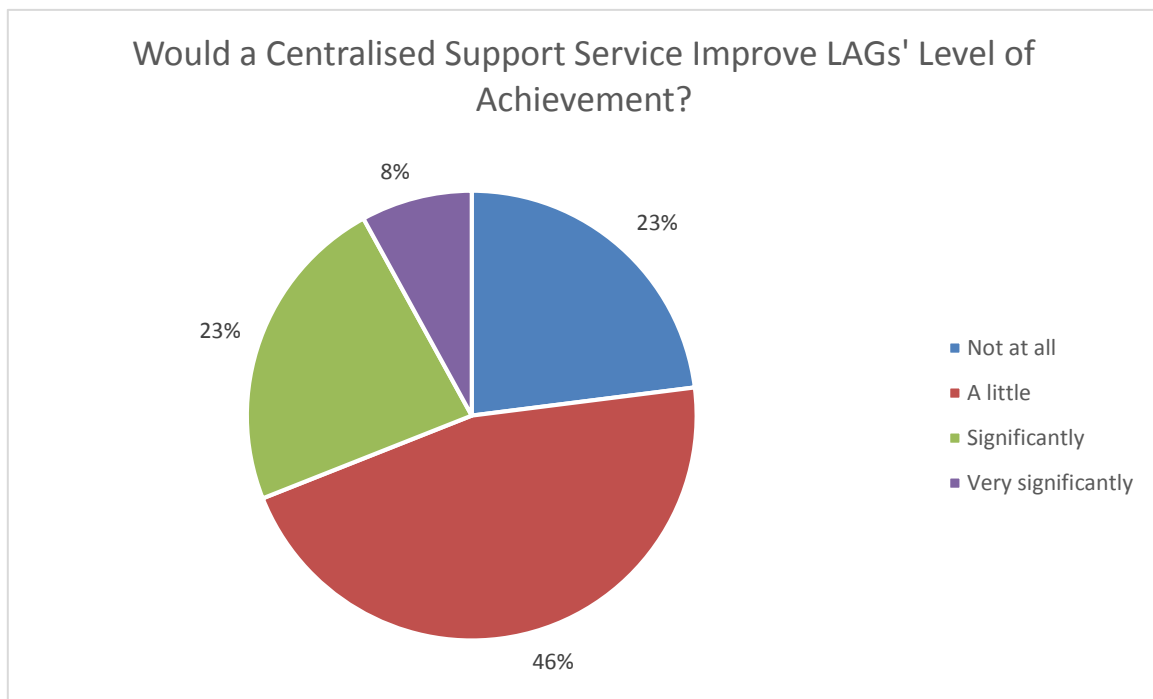
- Over all responding Romanian LAGs reported in a similar way to the EU sample.

- A larger proportion of the Romanian respondents thought that a centralised support service would improve the achievements of the LAG a little than at EU level (46% vs 27%).

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 13

Gaps and Support Needs at National/Regional RDP Level

Funded by the
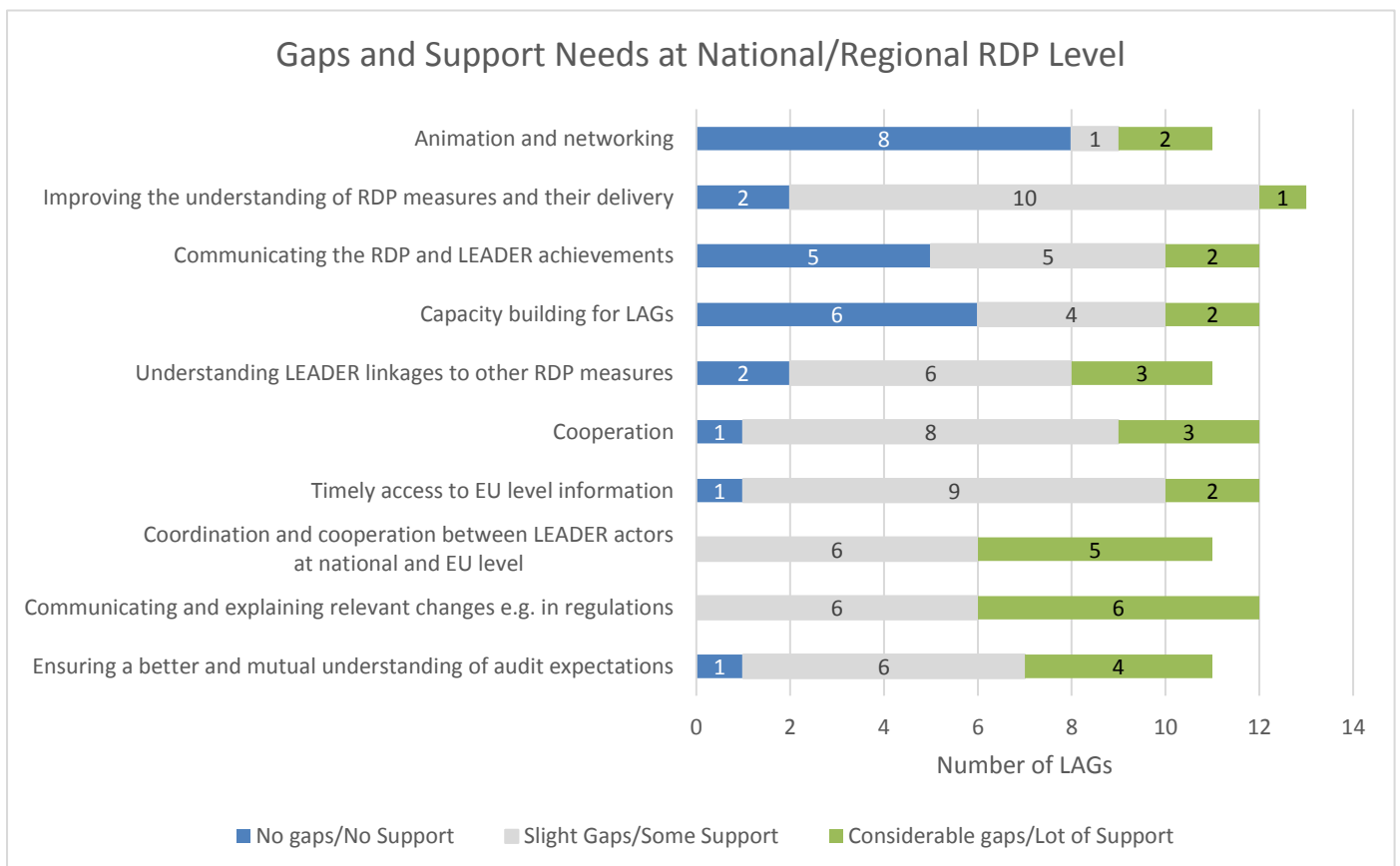
- Romanian LAGs tended to report a greater proportion of slight gaps / support needs than their EU counterparts.

- Responding Romanian LAGs reported more gaps/support needed for coordination and cooperation between LEADER actors and communicating and explaining relevant changes e.g. in regulations than the EU sample.

- For animation and networking and for capacity building for LAGs a greater proportion of responding Romanian LAGs reported Less gaps/support needed than the EU sample.

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 13
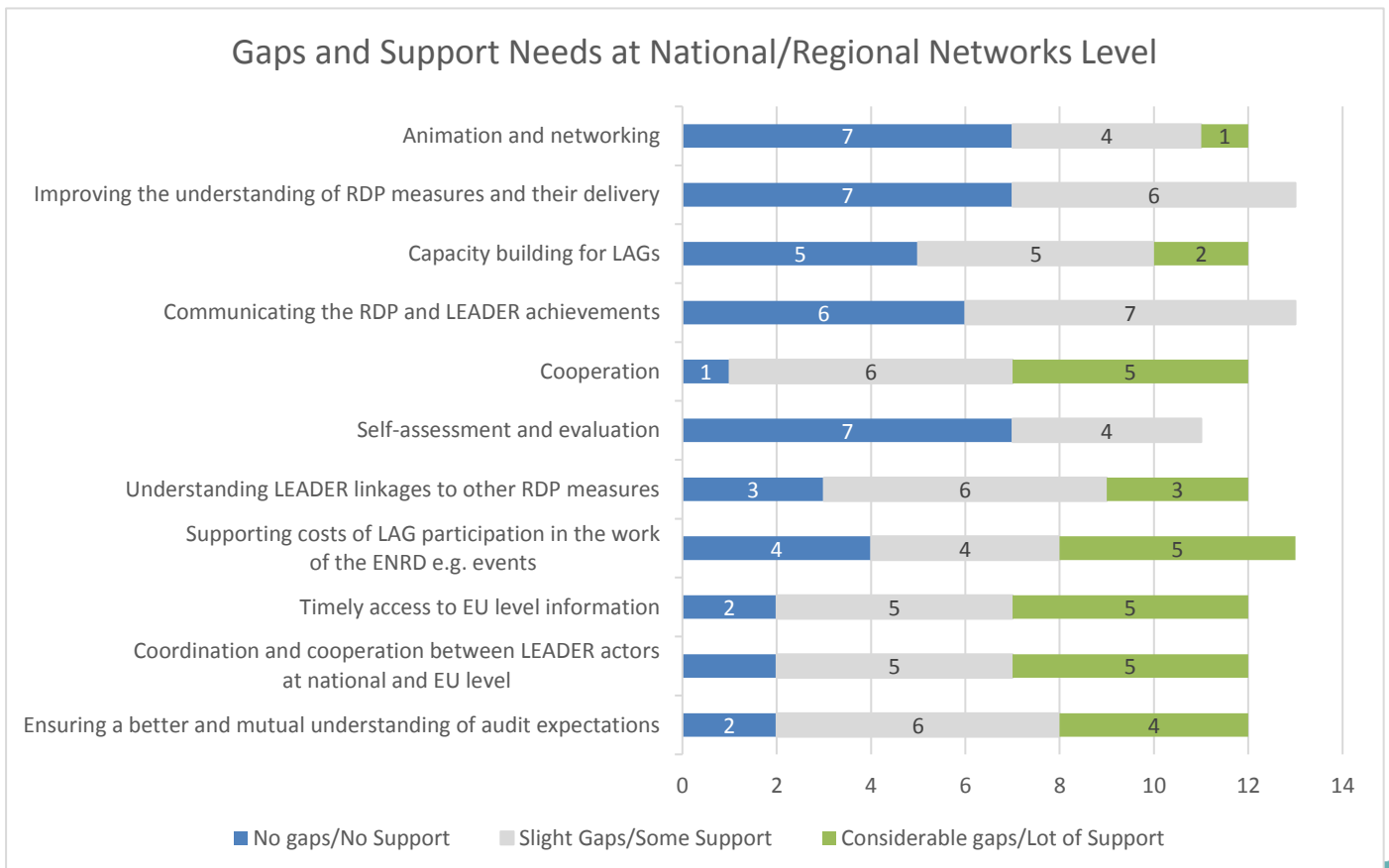
- The responses from Romanian LAGs were largely similar to those in the EU sample.

- None of the Romanian LAGs reported considerable gaps/lots of support needed with regard to improving the understanding of RDP measures and their delivery, self-assessment and evaluation and communicating the RDP and LEADER achievements, which between 15 and 20% of LAGs in the EU sample did.

- Romanian LAGs were notably more positive about the level of provision and lack of support needs for self-assessment and evaluation than the wider sample were.

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 13


Priority of Support Needs from ENRD
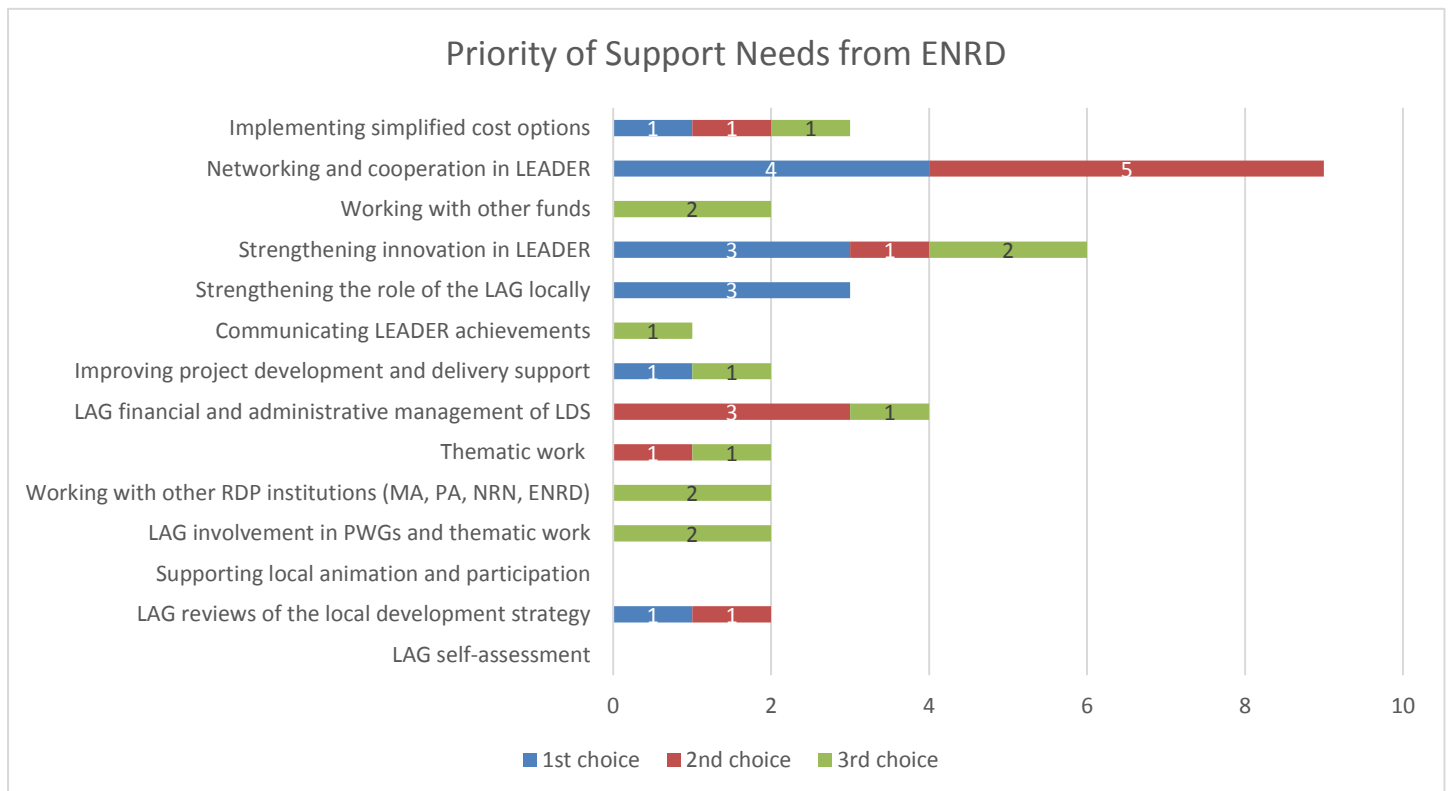
- There were a number of differences in the priority which Romanian respondents placed on their support needs compared to the EU sample. For example, the Romanian LAGs prioritised networking and cooperation in LEADER as first ranked need rather than second and strengthening innovation in LEADER as their second highest support needs (in the EU sample this ranked as the fourth priority).

- The responding Romanian LAGs did not rank implementing simplified cost options, the top EU sample priority, in their top three priorities.

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 13
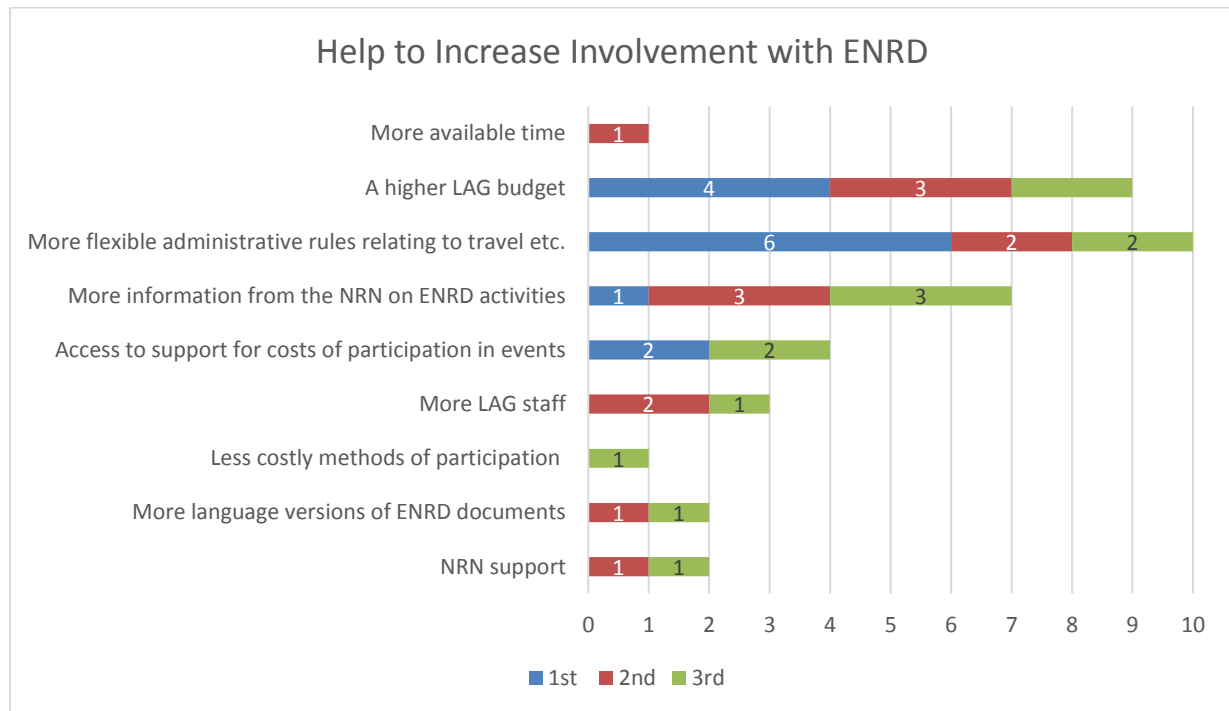
- The Romanian LAGs selected more flexible administrative rules for travel etc. as their top priority to increase their involvement with ENRD, and more available time (the top priority in the EU sample) was their joint bottom response.

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
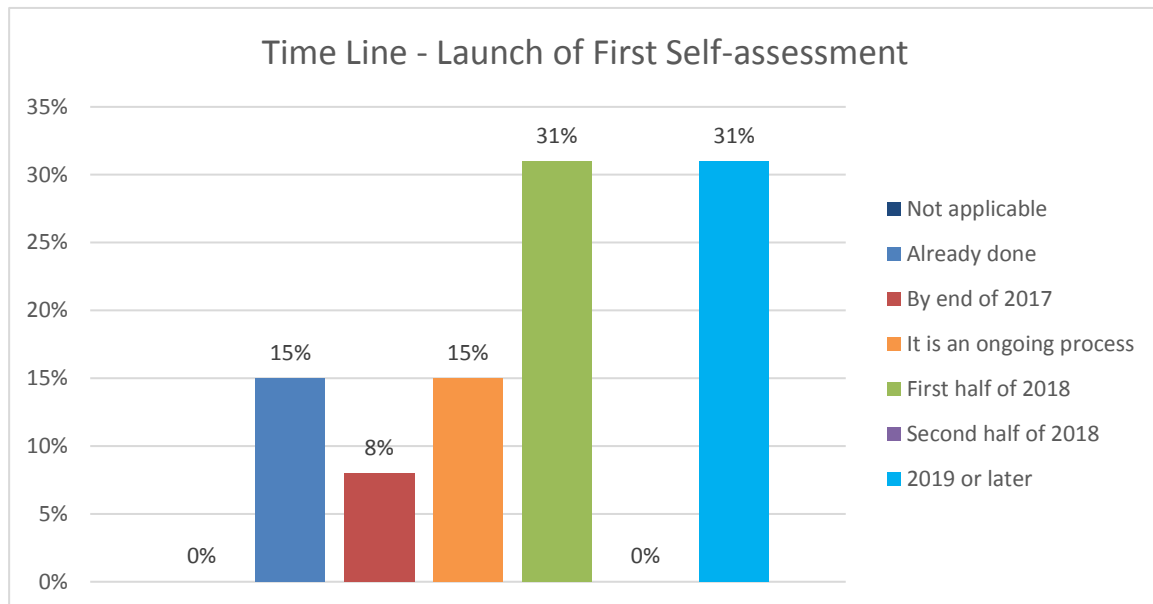- Important
- Essential

Total Number of Responses 13
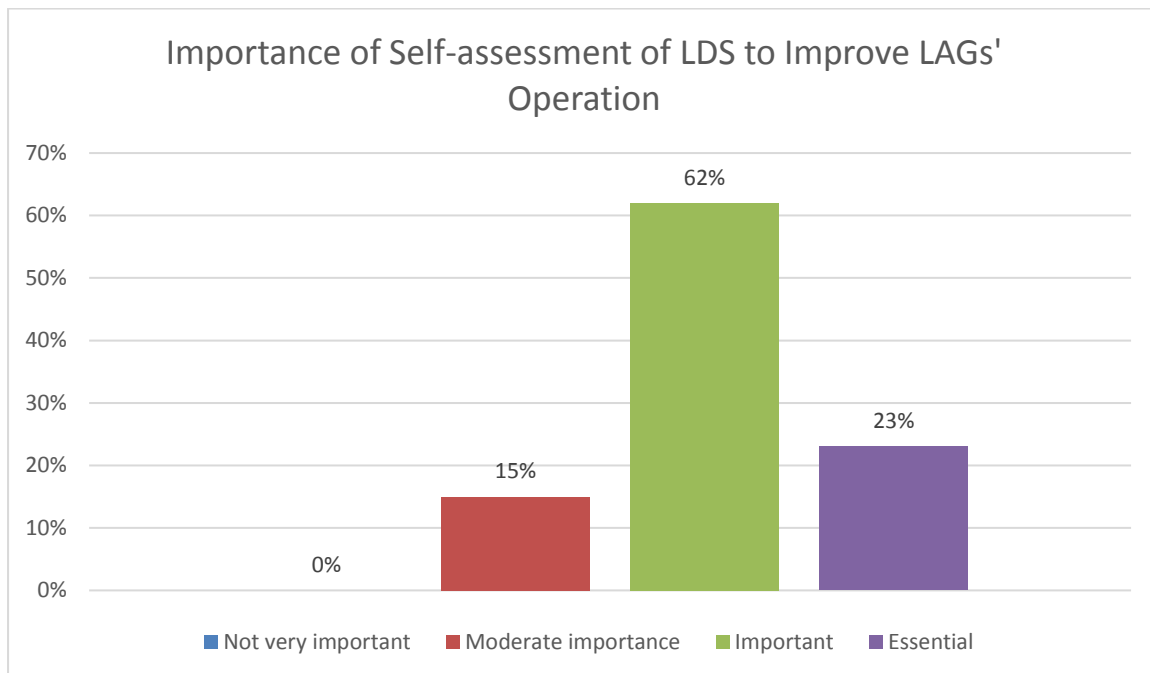
- More Romanian LAGs considered self-assessment as important than in the EU sample (62% vs 43%).

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 13

- Considerably more Romanian LAGs will be launching their first self-assessment in 2019 than the EU sample (31% vs 12%) however none will do so in the second half on 2018 vs 23% of the wider 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 13