



European Network for
Rural Development



LEADER: Acting locally in a changing world

Event Highlights

This ENRD Seminar brought together over 120 LEADER/CLLD practitioners to exchange on how to best demonstrate the relevance and added value – the ‘LEADERness’ – of the LEADER approach in a variety of thematic areas and beyond the local rural context.

The event showcased inspiring projects and Local Action Group (LAG) approaches through three field trips, a ‘marketplace’ of Austrian LAGs and short EU LAG presentations. The examples emphasised the importance of “doing things the LEADER way” and demonstrated successful strategies for current and emerging local challenges and opportunities.

Expert presentations and group discussion identified priority actions for the 2014–2020 period to boost LEADER’s role and achievements and translate these into success factors for the post-2020 period.

Event information

Date: 15-17 October 2018

Location: Rust, Austria

Participants: Over 120 representatives from Local Action Groups (LAGs), Managing Authorities (MAs), National Rural Networks (NRNs) and the European Commission’s DG AGRI.

Outcomes: Identification of priority actions for the 2014–2020 period to improve LEADER’s achievements; prioritise target groups and challenges; identify ways to effectively demonstrate LEADER’s added value; highlight success factors for the post-2020 period. A number of outputs developed on LAGs’ inspirational projects and approaches.

Web page: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-seminar-leader-acting-locally-changing-world_en

DEMONSTRATING LEADER ACHIEVEMENTS

LEADER Building social inclusion: integration, civil society and education, LAG nordburgenland plus

This field trip explored different approaches through which LEADER can positively influence relations between migrants/asylum seekers and the local population.

Valorising and protecting the region’s natural potential: nature tourism, biodiversity and digitisation, LAG nordburgenland plus

Project partners (Protected area, world heritage management and tourism marketing organisations) explained how LEADER helped them sensitise people to the value of nature and use of its touristic potential – whilst balancing environmental and economic interests.

Sustainable community development: youth, participation and vital villages, LAG Römerland Carnuntum

This field trip explored how the LAG deals with suburban issues such as rapid population growth, social integration, basic services and land use conflicts whilst supporting sustainable development.



Keynote speech

John Grieve, ENRD Contact Point

LEADER is a process of change – a process where questions related to added value, achievement, and objectives need to be asked again and again. The importance of demonstrating what LEADER, as a process, can achieve was reiterated.

The audience agreed that only 0–25% of actual LEADER achievement can be ‘captured’ and expressed through standard indicators. Additional indicators related to voluntary work, in-kind contributions, improvement of community capacity – among others – are essential to show LEADER’s full breadth of contribution.

At the same time, the ‘trinity’ of strategy-territory-partnership should remain at the core of LEADER, its essential value being that it is development done **by** local people and not **to** local people. LEADER actors should enable ‘external’ stakeholders to understand these values by demonstrating tangible contributions of LEADER to local development.

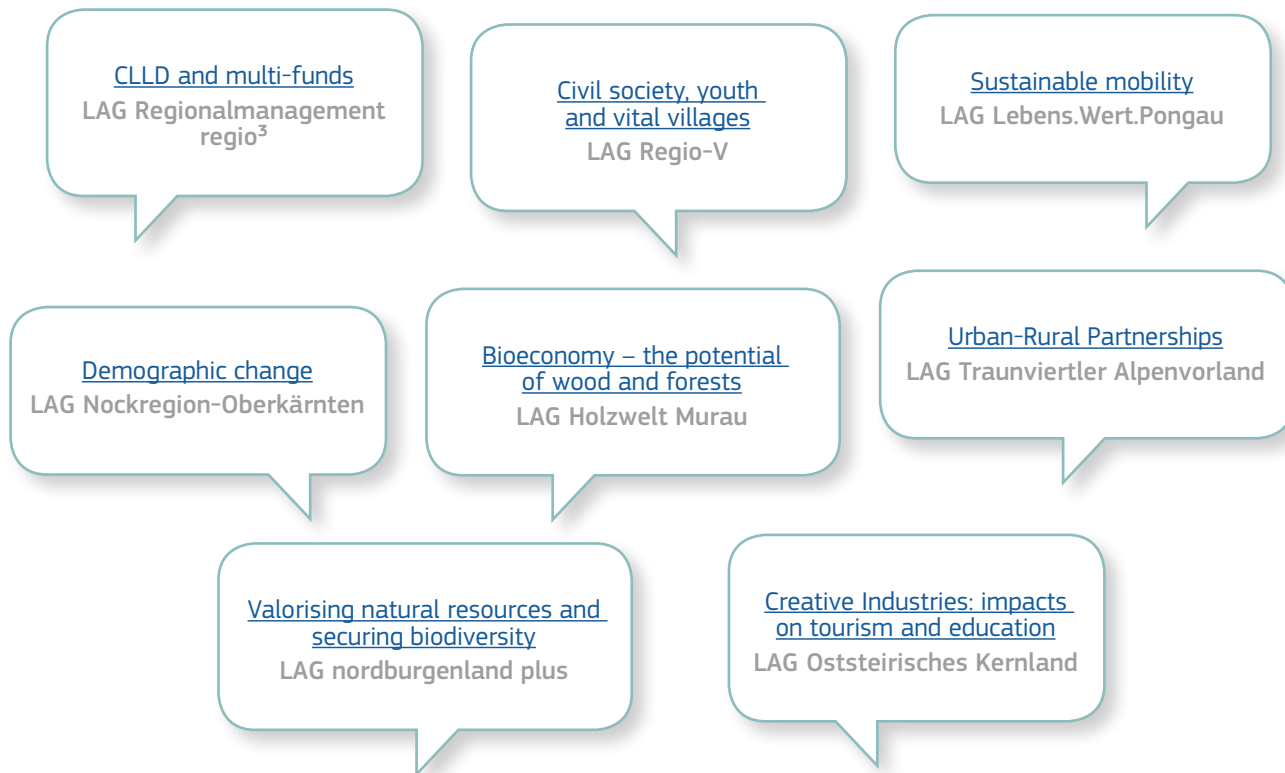


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The 'marketplace' featured eight Austrian LAGs who each highlighted how LEADER is addressing a specific theme, opportunity or need through their Local Development Strategies, their different implementation approaches and local project examples.

Explore the links below to find out more on each approach and project and to contact the LAG.



LEADER's place, role and contribution: Now and in the future

Peter Wehrheim, Member of the Cabinet of Phil Hogan, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development



This overview of the future CAP proposals and objectives focused on the role of LEADER in the CAP Strategic Plans. Proposals include ring fencing 5% of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) for LEADER, a higher co-financing rate of 80% and common provisions for CLLD across four funds set out in the Common Provisions Regulation. Cooperation projects will be selected by LAGs only. At Member State discretion, one fund may support all preparatory, management and animation costs. Multi-funding is enabled, but not mandatory. The aim is to develop an open and flexible delivery system which also ensures high levels of accountability. A results-oriented CAP will look at results for the entire Strategic Plan, rather than individual project level. LAGs need to set up effective monitoring and evaluation systems, using suitable quantitative and qualitative indicators to demonstrate the added value achieved including the contribution of LEADER across the relevant CAP strategic objectives.

The Austrian approach to LEADER

Ulrike Rauch-Keschmann, Christa Rockenbauer-Peirl, Austrian Federal Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism



Austria has a 'Master plan for rural areas'. The rural (EAFRD) and regional development (ERDF) funds are coordinated by a single ministry. Strengthening regional governance is a priority, multi-level governance and cooperating with stakeholders is part of the success model. LEADER is very important within this in developing capacities and reaching target groups. Austria has a budget of €247 million under the EAFRD for 77 LAGs which cover 89% of the area. LAG strategies have a thematic structure focusing on adding value, natural resources and cultural heritage and common welfare. LAG boards must include one third women and have professional LAG management (minimum 60 hrs weekly). Multi-funding with ERDF is possible (currently used only by the nine Tyrol region LAGs). Simplification of current and future programmes are important objectives. Cooperation and communication are key success factors.

LEADER Success Factors

Five LAGs and the Luxembourg MA gave the seminar a flavour of LAG strategies and activities in different areas and shared what had been the success factors.

[Changing perceptions: attracting people to the countryside \(VIDEO\)](#), 'Höga Kusten' LAG, Sweden

A video campaign based on successful entrepreneurs resulted in individuals wanting to move to the rural area, other LAGs wanting to copy the idea, higher profile with politicians, widespread media attention and local networks created.

[Pembrokeshire Local Action Network for Enterprise and Development, 'PLANED'](#), Wales, UK

The LAG supported renewable energy through a community-owned wind turbine providing income for 20-25 years, which in turn supports the business and transport sectors. The 'Remakery' circular economy project diverted 15 tonnes of waste and saved 51 tonnes of CO² in the first nine months. The success of these projects helped to influence local decision makers and support innovative job creation.

[2020 Goal: digital territory](#), 'Pays de Verdun' LAG, France

The project aims to build a digital economy through intensive training for the young unemployed and by bringing technology to their 'hyper-rural' area using a mobile classroom provided in a truck.

[Walking trails \(VIDEO\)](#), Lesvos Local Development Company, Greece

A network of paths has combined ancient heritage and culture with modern technology, built consensus and established an authentic destination of 'walking through the nature of Lesvos', part of a process of re-connecting social capital to local identity.

[Building a food ecosystem](#), 'Pays de Condruses' LAG, Belgium

A 'Farm Incubator' helps new entrant farmers create real jobs. The added value of LEADER has been the long-term strategy, leveraging other funding and providing territorial animation.

[Examples from Luxembourg](#), Ministry of Agriculture, Luxembourg

LEADER success factors in Luxembourg include providing an environment to test new concepts, supporting niche products and 'softer' projects. Examples include Luxembourg's first meat cooperative, the 'Earthship eco house' project and 'Ask the Farmer' cooperation project.

Various key success factors were identified through discussion of the project and LAG fair examples, including: LEADER's ability to support collective actions; strong networking in activities focused on tackling local problems; and the LAG's active role in designing and implementing relevant interventions. Additionally, provision of animation, coaching and support by LAGs was deemed very important.

LAGs can provide 'seed-funding' for the preparation of larger-scale development interventions, as well as the impetus for setting up strong partnerships. As well as hard work, a degree of 'fun' is seen to be important for maintaining the commitment of volunteer partners in local development networks.

The LEADER character ('LEADERness') of projects mainly relates to – the collective rather than individual nature of actions – the implementation of projects which local people consider to be meaningful – the identification and utilisation of local knowledge.

RECENT ENRD LEADER ACTIVITIES

[LAG survey highlights](#)

Susan Grieve, ENRD Contact Point



The December 2017 ENRD LAG Survey had 710 responses from 27 Member States, 72% of respondents were LAG managers. The LEADER method's importance was stressed, the bottom-up approach was the highest ranked principle.

Supporting project development was a top-priority LAG activity, however 84% of LAGs consider implementation is constrained by administrative and reporting requirements.

LAGs wish to devote more resources and time to animation, cooperation and innovation, and work with the ENRD on strengthening implementation, innovation, and networking and cooperation. Key implementation improvement needs LAGs identified relate to simplification, cooperation and delivery chain coordination.

[Practitioner-led Working Groups](#)

Peter Toth, ENRD Contact Point



The ENRD Contact Point supported LEADER Practitioner-led Working Groups (PWGs) focusing on key aspects of LEADER implementation. The Cooperation and Innovation PWGs have completed their work, relevant findings and recommendations are available at dedicated ENRD webpages. The Cooperation PWG also contributed to the updated version of the DG AGRI Guidance on Transnational Cooperation in LEADER.

The new Simplification PWG, targeting Managing Authorities, will explore how a simplified LEADER delivery system at the RDP level can be achieved within the current programming period.

Panel discussion

Discussion panel members agreed that LEADER is an 'asset' for rural development. The inspiring LAG and project examples demonstrated how LEADER can cross sectors and go beyond agriculture and forestry, it is a development method with a strong social element, is driven by innovation and can also lead or provide seed-funding resulting in larger-scale investments and achievements. They also showed how LEADER can connect local level and wider societal challenges with European objectives.

LEADER is designed to work with locally specific problems, other EU policies often do not 'trickle down' to local levels to address such challenges. There is a need to understand more about the number and nature of local people's involvement in LEADER activities and networks all over the EU. Continuity of local development capacities and LAGs between programming periods were thought essential.

Peter Wehrheim noted that LEADER is 'safe-guarded' in the Commission's legislative proposals for the 2021-2027 CAP. This position needs to be justified in the ongoing negotiations by better communicating LEADER results to 'outsiders' and engaging more with Member State administrations and other decision takers. LEADER must avoid using its own jargon, find a new language and communicate its benefits more clearly.

Christian Stampfer (MA, Tyrol) explained that Tyrol's key to success is improved governance at all levels. Increased bureaucracy and administrative burden may cause potential beneficiaries to question the transaction costs of using public support under the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).

SUCCESS FACTORS FOR THE FUTURE: WORKING GROUPS

Specific priority actions – Tell the LEADER story better to a wider audience: More effective communication about LEADER from local to EU level, including what its added value is. Make the communication meaningful for 'outsiders'. Enriched qualitative indicators to tell more of the story and better indicators designed to capture the more elusive 'LEADERness' and the 'ripple effect' of small actions. Support for and better use of Simplified Cost Options, a reduction in the MA's project approval time, and improved monitoring and evaluation support to LAGs.

Specific priority target groups include young people and people from the cities with the aim of stopping the brain drain and encouraging young people to stay in or return to rural areas. Demographic change also means that older people are becoming more important in rural areas.

Other target groups include migrants (addressing both their integration and inclusion), Green Tech, circular and low-carbon economy, agro-ecology and SMEs. Support mechanisms should be based in rural areas.

Challenges such as Brexit create uncertainty. There is a need to build trust with MAs within a framework of openness and to recognise that LAGs face different challenges depending on how experienced they are. Local decision-making is considered the best response to these challenges and MA involvement should be limited.

Most important messages to communicate to ensure LEADER remains distinctive: Provide an enabling LEADER delivery system which distinguishes LEADER implementation rules from the mainstream. Include LAGs in designing the future LEADER rules at the national level, avoid gold-plating, simplify. Develop rules to ensure: sufficient capacity for animation; preparing the ground; small projects; collective projects; experiments.

There is a need for a working group on the results-orientated approach to LEADER, including specific indicators and improved monitoring and evaluating procedures. Coaching at all levels, provision of examples and strengthened role of the NRNs should be encouraged.



CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

DG AGRI's Karolina Jasinska Muehleck noted that there still seem to be many questions on the future of LEADER amongst stakeholders. DG AGRI would reflect on how to provide more information to LAGs, MAs and NRNs. Support for the ENRD's LEADER Simplification PWG was reiterated and testing out ideas for designing measures for the future should be encouraged.

The project results showcasing the 'extras', the added value that LAGs are delivering should be communicated by all to their own parliamentarians and ministries, particularly those beyond the EAFRD teams, in clear and accessible ways to show how LEADER is contributing to policy delivery and results.