



# Improving LEADER Implementation: Making progress with Practitioner-Led Working Groups

## Workshop Highlights

This [Workshop](#) held in Brussels brought delegates together to discuss and share ideas. It provided:

- An update on progress of the work to date of the Cooperation and Innovation PWGs;
- Shared inspiring LEADER links – a project example of a bottom-up approach - to Demand Aggregation from the Broadband Competence Office's Support Facility (BCO-SF)
- An update on LEADER progress and emerging issues from the [LINC](#) and [CLLD Sweden](#) events.
- An opportunity to discuss the merits of the PWGs and improvements to the approach, as well as what the two PWGs can do in practical terms moving forward.

### Event Information

**Title:** Improving LEADER Implementation: Making progress on Practitioner Led Working Groups (PWGs)

**Date:** 1 June 2017

**Location:** Brussels, Belgium

**Organisers:** ENRD Contact Point

**Participants:** Over 40 representatives of Local Action Groups (LAGs), Managing Authorities (MA) and National Rural Networks (NRNs) from 16 Member States.

**Outcomes:** Recommendations were developed for the future work of the two PWGs and the use of the PWG approach.

**Web page:** [http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-improving-leader-implementation-through-practitioner-led-work\\_en](http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-improving-leader-implementation-through-practitioner-led-work_en)

## Summary of PWG work to date

### LEADER Cooperation PWG



The LEADER Cooperation PWG was launched in the autumn of 2016 with the overall objective to facilitate better transnational cooperation (TNC). The PWG's work to date has involved 46 members representing 20 EU Member States and aimed to identify harmonisation opportunities in relevant TNC rules and procedures. The proposals including common definitions of 'joint action' and 'common cost' and a generic TNC cooperation agreement template have been integrated into DG AGRI's TNC guidance and will be available on the ENRD website [LEADER Cooperation page](#).

### LEADER Innovation PWG

The Innovation PWG was launched in February 2017 with the objective of strengthening LEADER's contribution to promoting and achieving rural innovation. A core group of 29 active members are sharing ideas and examples on the on-line VIIMA interactive group discussion platform. Focusing on finding smart improvement solutions, identifying and addressing barriers to innovation, the PWG adopted a two-stage approach: considering immediate actions and future planning. Four discussion themes have developed: Innovating in the LAG; Enabling innovation in the delivery chain; Fostering local innovation by LAGs and Strengthening LEADER's rural innovation connections. New members are welcome to join the group, contact Peter Toth - [Peter@enrd.eu](mailto:Peter@enrd.eu) or John Grieve - [john@enrd.eu](mailto:john@enrd.eu).

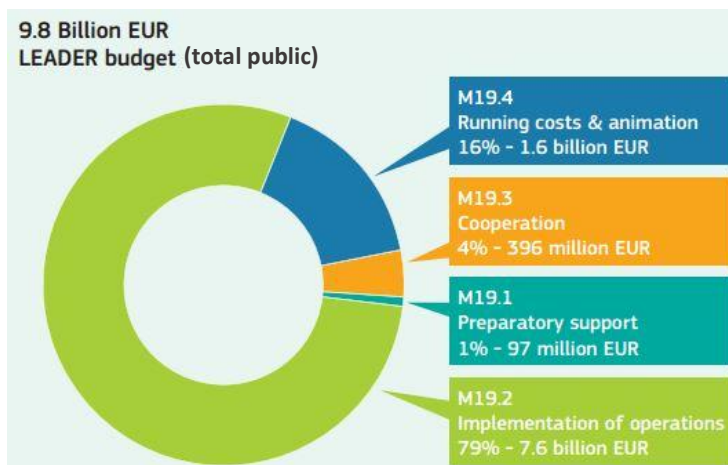
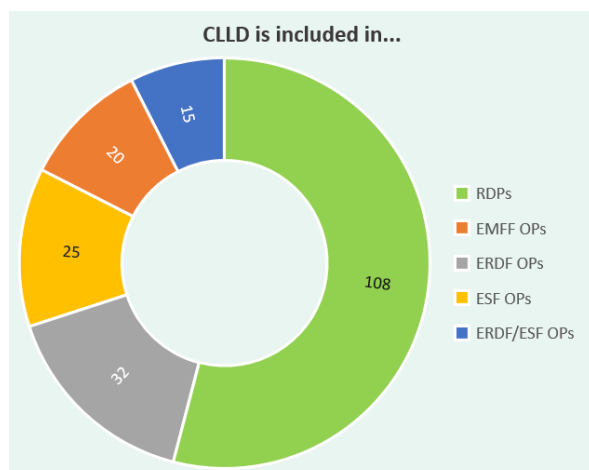


## Inspiring LEADER links: A bottom up approach to Demand Aggregation

Jan Droge from the [Broadband Competence Offices Support Facility](#) (BCO-SF) introduced this new European Commission supported BCO networking service. As one of BCO-SF's aims is to disseminate knowledge and exchange best practice, he showed a short video on the [B4RN](#) project, a bottom-up community driven solution to improving broadband provision in the rural North West of England. There is a clear opportunity for LAGs to play a role in aggregating demand and supporting these kinds of initiatives.



## LEADER Update – Facts and Figures



### LAGs approved to date

- 1 989 single-funded through EAFRD
- 174 single-funded through EMFF
- 277 multi-funded

Reports from the [Rural Networks' Steering Group](#), [LINC 2017](#) and [CLLD seminar in Båstad](#) presented key messages on simplification, communication, improving delivery, active LAGs and trusting and involving local people.

## Cooperation Workshop

The workshop examined practical implementation issues submitted and selected by participants for discussion. Sub-groups discussed and exchanged on:

- harmonising periods of calls between MS / regions for TNC projects;
- synergies between cooperation in the frame of LEADER TNC and INTERREG;
- evaluation of TNC projects;
- dealing with income generating TNC projects; and
- Nordic networking piloting the support of TNC.



For each of these themes participants considered the necessity for change, the barriers (institutional, regulatory, other) to positive change, and proposals to overcome relevant barriers. The most common barriers identified were **information gaps** or **insufficient exchange of information**.

Participants recognised that in seeking to harmonise TNC project calls it is not always possible to coordinate when these calls are opened (e.g. where Managing Authorities publish calls for projects). Participants agreed that once a call for projects is open, it should remain open to allow potential partners to 'meet'. This would also allow partner LAGs to coordinate the submission of their applications for support.

The role of ENRD in collecting more examples and information and in drawing up EU level guidance was emphasised, particularly in relation to income generating TNC projects and the need for simple and clear TNC monitoring and evaluation guidance. Those who discussed enhancing Nordic Networking agreed to extend the piloting of this approach by promoting the establishment of a network of TNC 'coaches' and setting up a dedicated Facebook discussion group. The ENRD CP will continue working with the Cooperation PWG on these topics.

## Innovation Workshop

The Innovation workshop discussions concentrated on three topics developed through the VIIMA platform examining the needs and constraints under each topic and identifying actions the PWG could consider.

- In **innovating in the LAG** a focus on innovative actions rather than projects is required. Constraints identified included limited staff resources, the lower relative priority placed on innovation vs administration and risk averse LAGs. There is a need to identify what innovation is at LAG level, involving and training board members in innovation was an identified priority, possibly developing an innovation training tool kit. Sharing good positive examples of innovative animation actions and engagement tools were also requested. In order to achieve this there is a need consider how these messages can best be communicated more widely within the community, for example translating simple documents into MS languages for use at local level.
- **Fostering local innovation by LAGs.** In response to the question – why innovate? - the workshop reinforced that innovation should be seen positively and as a means, not an end. The PWG wants to share information and optimism, collecting best practice and also examples showing what did not work and why. LAG managers and animators are seen to be essential in this but they need to have the right tools available. More information from the BCO-SF on community led Broadband would be helpful to work out any potential bottlenecks and see whether LEADER groups can become involved in this project.
- **Enabling innovation in the delivery chain:** Participants suggested that innovation is often unjustly equated with risk. The delivery chain is risk intolerant and ‘dominated by fear of errors’. It is vitally important to promote a positive perspective in the chain and communicate the local meaning and relevance of innovation. Examples of practical procedures and flexible ways of delivering innovation were called for. The PWG could identify which points in the delivery chain inhibited innovation and which ones enabled it drawing lessons on transferable improvements.

## Making the most of the PWG method – Lessons learnt

Smart ways to improve LEADER innovation



- 1 Innovation in LAG -survey / catalogue innovation animation
- 2 Innovation in LAG -engage LAG members (especially youth) more
- 3 Innovation in LAG -innovation training for LAG members
- 4 Innovation by LAGs -identify LEADERs Broadband barriers by MS
- 5 Innovation by LAGs -PWG to encourage positive perspective
- 6 Innovation by LAGs -NSUs disseminate e.g. effectively and simply
- 7 Innovation in delivery chain -establish and share local innovation meaning
- 8 Innovation in delivery chain -identify critical points, the inhibitors / enablers
- 9 Innovation in delivery chain -explore LEADER innovation platform conditions
- 10 Innovation in delivery chain -explore LEADERs role in 'ecosystem'
- 11 Innovation in delivery chain -promote a positive perspective

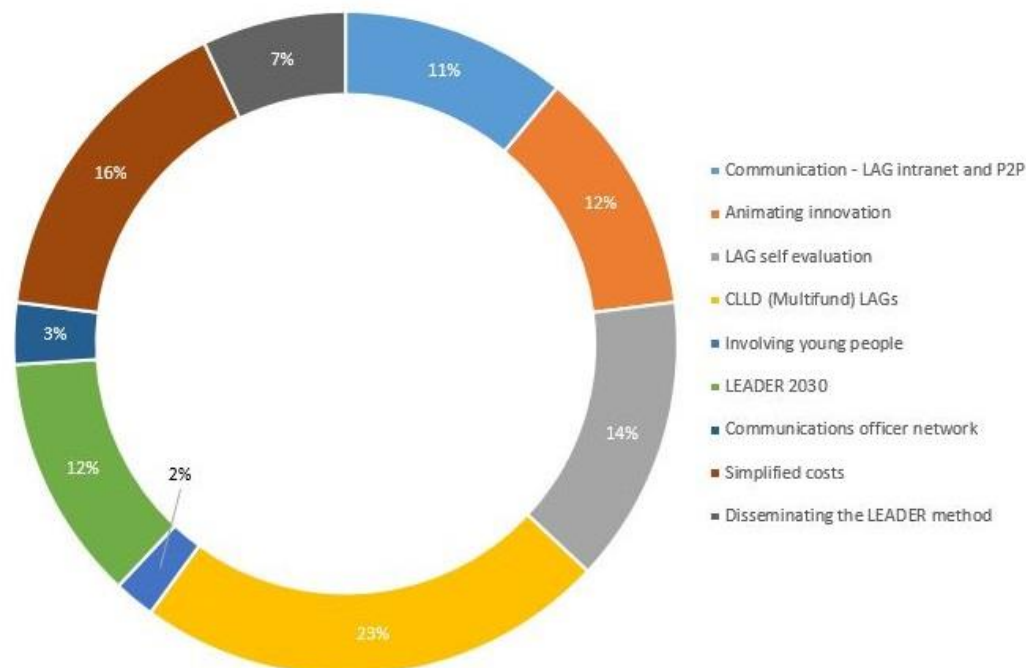
The afternoon plenary focused on lessons learnt from the experience both of ‘managing’ and participating in a practitioner-led working group.

Participants highlighted the need for appropriate preparation, scoping and testing preceding the launch of the PWG. The membership of the PWGs can be expanded to integrate new perspectives and enrich the discussion. Summarising and sharing the results are also essential steps in the process.

As the PWGs rely heavily on online discussion, they require careful moderation to keep their focus. Being responsive to participant needs and queries, as well as providing timely responses is important for maintaining interest in the themes discussed. The facilitator/moderator should also be prepared to shift the relative focus or importance from one topic to another and be guided by members’ interests e.g. re new or modified topics. The moderator should monitor user participation and steer, provide support, respond to needs and help keep the momentum of the work, but should not go beyond these activities.

## What are the priority LEADER improvement themes?

Participants discussed a wide range of other improvement themes the PWG method could be applied to over the next year. It was agreed that no new PWG will be established immediately whilst the work of the existing groups will continue. The ENRD CP will aim to integrate these themes into its LEADER work, some topics will be further developed as part of workshops and seminars planned for the coming year and may in turn then result in new PWGs.



## How can the usefulness of the PWG method be improved and extended?

Participants worked in groups to discuss ideas for improving the usefulness of the PWG method. The following improvements were proposed:

- conduct 'zoom in' meetings to enable in-depth discussion of PWG findings;
- the use of regular web based video-conferencing to make online exchange more 'alive';
- the use of a succinct format and presentation in summarising PWG findings in a way which is easy to 'digest' and disseminate more widely to stakeholders;
- PWG outcomes should be the basis of planning of further actions, as one of the ways to recognise the efforts and the work put in by its members;
- the role of the PWG in the 'overall journey' of improving LEADER implementation should be considered and understood;
- information gathered in the PWG should be more widely disseminated outside of PWG 'boundaries';
- ENRD should continue to dedicate resources to supporting further PWG meetings and discussions.

## ENRD Resources & Tools on LEADER/CLLD

Follow the latest LEADER/CLLD **News & Events** on the ENRD website and via the ENRD Newsletter.

Explore the CLLD **cooperation offers** & find a project partner

Get in touch with Local Action Groups from across Europe through our **LAG Database**.

Learn more about national & regional rules on LEADER/CLLD Cooperation from our dedicated factsheets.

Get informed on hot LEADER/CLLD topics from the **ENRD Publications**.

