

STREAM 1 Plenary Discussion Summary

How can we design a Programme which captures the added value of LEADER?

Summarized by

ENRD CP

I. Topics initiated Day 1 of the event and hosted by participants during Day 2:

1. How to strengthen the bottom-up approach? Host: *Kristiina Liimand, Tartu Rural Development Association, Estonia*
2. How can evaluation enhance the added value of LEADER? Hosts: *Jela Tvrdonova and Hannes Wimmer, Evaluation Helpdesk*
3. How to encourage CLLD in MS? Host: *Goran Soster, LAG PRLEKIJA - PRA GIZ, Slovenia*
4. How to implement CLLD? How to make better use of multi-fund? Hosts: *Panagiotis Patras, Trikala Development Agency sa kenakap and Manuela Sampaio, FLAG Além Tejo*
5. Coordination among funds responsible for CLLD. Host: *Louis Chaves, Minha Terra Network, Portugal.*
6. Design of LEADER measures, prioritization, challenges to address.
 - a. What kind of challenges in rural areas are better addressed by LEADER (and cannot be addressed by other funding)? Host: *Urszula Budzich-Szukala, FARNET Support Unit*
 - b. Design of 2014-2020 LEADER measures (priorities for LEADER, project eligibility aspects). Host: *Jean-Michel Courades, DG AGRI*
7. Engaging research with local development to recapture the LEADER spirit, Hosts: *Gustav Nemes, Local Action Group for the Balaton Uplands, Hungary and Anna Augustyn, ENRD Contact Point*
8. Customer oriented programmes. Host: *Attila Takács, National Agricultural Advisory, Educational and Rural Development Institution, Hungary*
9. Animation and advisory: why 25%? Host: *Jacques Fons, LAG Redange-Wiltz, Luxembourg*
11. How can LEADER complement national level programmes? Host: *Lisa Jones, Reach Bridgend Rural Partnership, United Kingdom*
12. Consultation of LAGs in the RDP design process. Host *Lucía Maritnez, NRN, Spain*

II. Main points of discussion during the Stream 1 plenary discussion following the open group discussions:

1. **The implementation of CLLD** multi-fund approach is not considered a problem in itself for LAGs/FLAGs. In fact it is considered the right answer for designing a comprehensive territorial strategy. Participants provided some suggestions to support the implementation of CLLD and multi-fund approach, in particular :
 - National common regulatory implementation framework is to be applied by all funds involved in CLLD schemes;
 - Provision of clear guidance is needed to support the use of multi-fund CLLD;
 - It is effective that a single designated MA to be responsible for all the operations related to the multi-fund CLLD, with representatives from all funds involved. The single MA should be responsible to organise the selection of LDS and in a second stage follow the implementation phase;
 - The collection and dissemination of multi-funded examples implemented by LAGs in this programming period would help the exchange of information and expertise between LAGs.

1. Designing the Rural Development Programmes

- The **consultation process** is considered important for preparing the RDP. The use of a number of different methodologies for consultation is recommended, such as online fora, online conferences, questionnaires, think thanks, use of social media, etc. Networking can play an active role in enhancing the participation in this process and involving as many public/private actors as possible.
- **Bottom-up approach:** LAGs remain important partners in the process of identifying the rural areas needs and RDP priorities, designing the strategy and consequently the RDP. In Finland, where the process of designing the future programme has already started, LAGs have been involved in the process and the RDP objectives are based on the LAGs main needs. The active use of the bottom-up approach helps to capture the real needs of local communities.
- The LEADER approach is relevant **for all six EAFRD priorities**. The added value of LEADER should be assessed by the MA for each priority.
- **Consultation and connection across funds:** the MAs of other funds are not familiar with the LEADER approach and this can prevent the implementation of CLLD in many countries/regions. Better communication and an extensive consultation process which involves other MAs can facilitate the implementation of the LEADER approach.



2. Preparing the Rural Development Programmes and LDS: design of measures, eligibility criteria, etc.

- It was pointed out that the implementation of LEADER needs some **specific project eligibility conditions to capture its added value**. It was agreed that these rules should not compromise the capacity of LEADER to introduce innovation, which is considered an important value that the approach can add to the RDPs. The preparation of a concise list of rules for LEADER, which can establish what it is not eligible, is considered useful to support its implementation and to enable the MAs to focus more on how to support projects and less on what types of projects to finance.
- **Small scale projects and integrated projects** serving multiple objectives should be eligible as well as the **umbrella projects**, already successfully implemented in this programming period in some countries.
- **Specific eligibility criteria to encourage participation of private actors and women** (for example to fix a minimum % of supported projects) can increase involvement of new stakeholders groups, and consequently ensure better results for the implementation both of RDPs and LDS.
- At LDS level it is recommended to find a balance between the need to design a specific territorial based strategy, with clear objectives and quantified targets, and the need to have a LDS flexible enough to be adapted to the changes of the external context. The LDS should be considered as a “living document”.

3. Evaluation

- Evaluating LEADER has proved to be complex; it was pointed out that the key element to improve the evaluation is **the identification of the added value of LEADER**, and this is essential both for the ex-ante and on-going evaluation.
- A possibility to define the added value is linking it to the activities implemented by the LAGs. This should allow having concrete elements to define the added value and subsequently to define common and specific indicators. In the light of this, **the active involvement of LAGs in the evaluation process is strongly suggested**.
- The capacity to evaluate LEADER and show the concrete results achieved, such as for example the creation of new jobs, with the implementation of the LDS is important also for increasing the LEADER budget. Without specific economic results it becomes unlikely “to win” additional domestic funds.
- The experiences and resources developed by the NRNs should be used both to build the LAGs capacity and to undertake the evaluation of this programming period in order to pre

- prepare high quality LDS for the future. Evaluation activities could be financed also using technical assistance and funds under measure 431.

4. Implementation of the LDS

- **A clear distinction between animation and administration** was indicated as an important element to ensure the implementation of the LDS. Animation is central to implement the LDS, regardless to the dimension of the LAG. Without the participation and commitment of local actors in the implementation of the LDS, a good strategy is not enough to obtain positive results. Often during this programming period LAGs managers have been more and more absorbed by administrative tasks, without having enough time to dedicate to animation with negative effects for the implementation of the LDS. Due to its importance, funds for animation should not be a too restricted percentage of the LAG budget.

5. Research and added value of LEADER

- Links between LAGs and researchers as well as those between programming and research are not very strong. Several barriers exist to using research in rural development, such as its frequent focus on urban areas and lack of interest in rural areas, lack of funds and time, etc. Nevertheless research can have positive effects and bring additional resources, such as develop expertise, help LAGs to build their capacity (for example studies of LAG areas are supported under measure 431 to design LDS), improve networking, etc. For this reason an effort should be made to promote **more involvement of researchers in programming at national and local level.**

6. Strengthening communication

- LEADER and the LAGs activities are often unknown to many categories of stakeholders. Improving communication thorough the organisation of events or road shows where good experiences are presented would help to raise awareness about the added value of the implementation of the LEADER approach. Using a common and simple language and avoiding too much “technical jargon” would also help.

III. Summaries of open discussions within Stream 1:

The table includes available summaries provided by the open discussion groups' hosts

#	Topic	Host	Summary
1	How to strengthen the bottom-up approach?	Kristiina Liimand	
2	How can evaluation enhance the added value of LEADER?	Jela Tvrdonova, Hannes Winner	
5	Coordination among funds responsible for CLLD	Louis Chaves	
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