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ELARD

European LEADER Association for Rural Development

LEADER/CLLD declaration for 2020+

President Kristiina Tammets



ELARD conference in Tartu

“Renewing LEADER/CLLD for 2020+; Celebrating 25 years of LEADER in Europe!”

140 delegates from 25 European countries representing about 2000 LAGs, rural networks, managing authorities and the European Commission contributed to the declaration which was composed using participatory methods during two days of conference workshops.

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom.



The Tartu Declaration

Renewing LEADER/CLLD for 2020+

On **22 and 23 November 2016**, the ELARD conference “**Renewing LEADER/CLLD for 2020+; Celebrating 25 years of LEADER in Europe!**” was held in **Tartu, Estonia**.

At this conference, the 140 delegates from 25 European countries representing about 2000 LEADER Local Action Groups of Europe, rural networks, managing authorities and the European Commission, developed the **following vision** for the year 2027 as regards the role of LEADER/CLLD (Community-Led Local Development) and local action groups:

LEADER/CLLD VISION 2027

LEADER in 2027 is an independent, trusted, creative, well-known, solution-oriented movement based on community ownership with a goal of having smart, vibrant rural communities oriented to the needs of their members. LEADER is more visible and works from people to people. Local Action Groups (LAGs) are the basis of regional development, using the LEADER approach, having support, respect, flexibility and trust at the regional, national and European level. The mutual understanding of the LEADER principles interconnects all levels and actors. Local development strategies are based on rural people's real needs and implemented by truly autonomous LAGs. There is a strong trust between stakeholders throughout the delivery chain. LAGs have the capacity to involve the passive actors within their territories and measure the added value of their work both in terms of qualitative and quantitative indicators. Member States/regions are able to design a single CLLD source of funding from the various European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs) and implement it under one coordinating body (Managing Authority) following one unique set of rules at the EU level. LAGs have a multi-funded, harmonised approach to transnational cooperation throughout Europe and with third countries as an effective tool for rural development.

Based on the resolutions developed by the delegates of the conference, and with the contributions of several LEADER Local Action Groups Networks **the following declaration**, directed at the European institutions and the Member States, has been adopted.

1. We, representatives of LEADER Local Action Groups, believe that the current political developments in Europe make the **25-year-old LEADER/CLLD approach more important than ever before**. It is a European-rooted bottom-up development approach that can help to counterbalance anti-European tendencies in local communities by contributing to social inclusion and sustainable economic development in the territories where it is applied. Furthermore, the LEADER method is a good partnership tool for enhancing good rural governance and it has been the only instrument that has brought the decision-making as regards European funding to the very local level. By using the LEADER approach, **local communities have taken on the responsibility** for deciding and designing their own living and working environment. Therefore, we strongly support using this potential when designing EU and national policies, and believe **the initiative of communities and their role in rural development should certainly grow in the future**.

Main messages of the declaration

1. **Bigger role of communities and bottom-up approach** in rural development. LEADER/CLLD needs wider platform and in addition to rural development policy it has to be integrated to all relevant EU and national policies;
2. **Better and closer dialogue** with Commission and MAs and more efficient solutions to improve the quality of LEADER/CLLD. Trust the experience of LAGs that they have received throughout 25 years. Representative networks of LAGs must be accepted as full partners by MAs and Commission;
3. **Empowerment of communities** as main purpose of LEADER must come back into focus. Leader principles have to be re-asserted and treated with full respect;



Main messages of the declaration

4. **Balanced legal framework:** correct application of the LEADER method in Member States on the one hand and a significant decrease in the bureaucratic burden that lies on LAGs on the other hand;
5. **Truly bottom-up implementation of LDS:** the flexibility of wide range of development actions has to be assured to LAGs. Good practices where LAGs design their own measures have to be promoted more widely. Selection and approval of TNC projects has to be done by LAGs;
6. **Animation activities and capacity building of LAGs.** We need to use this potential better and create conditions that allow LAGs to concentrate their role of animating their area;



Main messages of the declaration

7. **Simple and harmonized rules:** timely definition of simple rules, guidelines, evaluation and IT systems aiming at maximum harmonization between the ESI Funds. All stakeholders are involved. Flexible and open platforms for IT.;
8. **3in1 CLLD in Members States:** one CLLD source of funding, coordination under one MA followed by one unique set of rules at the EU level;
9. **Collegial spirit has to be strengthened:** LAGs and authorities need to be well-trained and made aware of each others realities (study tours, trainings, staff exchange, etc).

Thank You!



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