

Permanent Subgroup on LEADER and Community-Led Local Development

3rd Meeting

Brussels, 16 February 2016

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1. Introductory session

9.30 – 9.50

Welcome by
Matthias
Langemeyer (DG
AGRI)

Matthias Langemeyer welcomed the participants on behalf of DG AGRI and reminded them of the objectives of the meeting, which were to:

- Provide an update on the state of play of programming and implementation of LEADER and LEADER cooperation activities;
- Present recent activities and initiatives on improving LEADER/CLLD delivery, identifying success and involving stakeholders; and
- Facilitate exchange on key themes related to LEADER/CLLD implementation.

Mr Langemeyer added that all RD programmes had been approved by the end of last year. A total of 109 programmes are going to support LEADER with €9.7 billion of public funds. This accounts for almost 7% of the EAFRD budget to be decided upon locally. 25 MS opened the support for CLLD which goes beyond rural policy, and in 19 of those MS (but not all their regions) LAGs are given the possibility to use several sources of funding for implementing their strategies.

In many programmes the selection of LAGs has been finalised and the implementation of local development strategies is starting. The specific features of LEADER enable it to adapt to changing circumstances and address local needs (such as climate, inclusion of migrants, economic revival) in an innovative way.

There is scope for simplification of rural development policy – e.g. through the use of Simplified Cost Options, the use of a Lead Fund and direct selection of cooperation projects by LAGs – which can all alleviate the burden on both programme authorities and beneficiaries.

MAs, NRNs and LAGs have already developed many good practices to achieve better results in LEADER implementation, and these should be taken up and shared with the LEADER community. The Commission is committed to facilitating this peer learning process via the activities of the ENRD Contact Point. It is particularly pleased to see initiatives by groups of MS to test out ideas and discuss points of particular interest, such as the recent meeting on umbrella projects.

Presentation of
objectives and
agenda by Paul Soto
(ENRD CP)

Paul Soto reminded participants that LEADER first started 25 years ago as a Community Initiative, and since then it has become the most extensive network of local development in the EU. But some tension exists between the implementation system and procedures on the one hand and the original principles of LEADER on the other. It is important to ensure that LEADER can still innovate and regenerate itself.

Paul Soto outlined the agenda of the day, explaining that it corresponded to the eight key themes selected in the first LEADER/CLLD Subgroup meeting in

April 2015.

2. The state of play

9.50 – 10.20

Christine Falter,
Urszula Budzich-
Tabor "[LEADER
CLLD State of play](#)"

Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided

Christine Falter from DG AGRI gave an overview of the funding allocated to LEADER by Member State and by sub-measure as well as some key outputs and targets to be achieved. This was based on data from the SFC.

Urszula Budzich-Tabor from the ENRD CP provided further information and analysis on the progress of LAG selection, the key themes addressed by LEADER, multi-funding and the division of roles among MA, PA and LAG. This was based on the analysis of RDP screenings and from responses to the LEADER MA survey.

Discussion

Michael Dower (PREPARE) acknowledged the value of the Balkan countries participation in the September 2015 LEADER event in Milan. He explained that the EAFRD cannot support the costs of non-EU partners involved in transnational cooperation projects with EU LAGs, but IPARD and ENPARD funds could be used for this purpose. DG AGRI should play an important role in inviting DG NEAR (which is charge of enlargement and neighbourhood policy) to promote this activity and funding. The Commission welcomed the invitation but explained that this requires a long process and may need accreditation procedure.

Johan Magnusson (MA, SE) emphasised the importance of DG REGIO and DG EMPL representatives attending the LEADER sub-group where important exchanges of information and coordination actions can start; they could also provide more detailed information concerning the implementation of CLLD under the ERDF and the ESF (number of LAGS funded, budget etc.).

The Commission explained that DG REGIO and DG EMPL participants had been invited but were unable to attend. The meeting of the ESI Funds Expert Group (EGESIF) in April will provide for opportunity to present more detailed information concerning CLLD implementation by the four funds supporting CLLD.

Panagiotis Patras (LAG, GR) suggested that the division of roles among LAG, MA and PA had caused some obstacles for LEADER implementation in the previous period, and further guidance from DG AGRI would be useful to avoid this occurring. The Commission responded that DG AGRI is monitoring the issue and MAs are required to provide such information in the RDPs.

3. Activities to improve LEADER/CLLD delivery (1)

10.20 – 11.15

Edina Ocsko,
Alexander Spriet:
["What can NRNs offer? NRN support for LAGs and LEADER/CLLD implementation"](#)

Elena Maccioni:
["LEADER Tools on the ENRD website"](#)

Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided

This session provided information about NRN and ENRD tools to support capacity building of LEADER actors and facilitate LEADER/CLLD implementation.

Edina Ocsko from the ENRD Contact Point gave an overview of the different types of LEADER/CLLD implementation support that NRNs are providing, based primarily on a mapping report prepared in 2015. **Alexander Spriet** from the Flemish NRN outlined the Learning Networks for LEADER initiative that they offer LAG coordinators and other LEADER actors in order to facilitate exchange of experience and development of cooperation projects.

Elena Maccioni from the ENRD Contact Point briefly detailed the various tools already available on the ENRD website (or under development) to improve the implementation of LEADER and facilitate cooperation between LAGs: the LEADER Toolkit, LEADER FAQs, LAG database and Partner Search Tool.

Her presentation was followed by an interactive exercise to obtain participant feedback concerning the templates proposed for the LAG profile and the cooperation offers. This feedback will feed into the LAG Database and the Partner Search Tool respectively. A document with CP proposals concerning specific elements of the templates was presented. It includes key themes for the LAG strategies and cooperation offers, LAG area physical characteristics and their assets and land use. Participants were asked to review these proposals and their comments will be considered when finalising the templates.

The final exercise of this session asked participants to propose questions that they would like to be answered in the LEADER FAQ section of the website.

The following groups of questions were submitted during the Subgroup meeting:

(1) Basic questions on LEADER/CLLD and rural networking:

- what is the Subgroup on LEADER/CLLD? Why is it relevant to me? How can I get involved?
- what is the European Rural Networks' Assembly, Steering Group? Why is it relevant to me? How can I get involved?
- what is the European Evaluation Helpdesk?

(2) Questions on LEADER/CLLD implementation:

- where are we really with LEADER/CLLD implementation? How many LAGs

are operational? How many of them use more than one fund? How many of them, and which ones, can use ESF & ERDF? How many LAGs are urban ones?

- what are the implications of choosing Lead Fund for the use of umbrella projects and how they are applied?

(3) Questions on LEADER cooperation:

- what is the support rate for other MS for TNC? Is it different from cooperation between LAGs within the MS?

- is support rate of TNC differentiated (e.g. investment, other activities)? It might be problematic to start TNC cooperation when support rate for TNC in one MS/region goes down to 60% while others have 100%;

- cooperation with third countries: we need a Toolkit for that. Are there examples of contracts? How to prove the existence of a partnership? How to prove the existence of the LDS? How big should the region be? What about common costs?

- what is the geographical eligibility of the RDP and the question of any limitation on expenditure outside the RDP zone? This poses a real problem for cooperation projects, which often go outside the RDP area. Is LEADER cooperation counted within any such limitation?

- please provide information about RDPs concerning type of application for TNC (on-going or periodical calls & timing through the year). Are the LAGs allowed to apply for preparatory phase costs?

(4) Questions on proposals for further action:

- we need exchange between ministries at national and international level in order to exchange experience regarding multi-funding. Study tours for ministry people would be useful.

- we should study and adapt SCOs from Erasmus+ to LEADER cooperation.

- in addition to partner search, we should have a tool for assisting LAGs on rules in different countries, which is very hands-on, to make cooperation easier.

4. Activities to improve LEADER/CLLD delivery (2)

11.45 – 13.00

Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided

This session provided information on four ENRD CP activities:

- Outcomes of the Simplified Cost Options (SCO) workshop
- Outcomes of the Umbrella Projects workshop
- The upcoming ENRD workshop on 'Social inclusion', including a presentation of social inclusion activities by the Swedish NRN and LAGs

Gregorio Dávila
Díaz: Reflection on
the ENRD
Workshop on
Simplified Cost
Options in
LEADER/CLLD

- An update on planned cooperation support activities by the ENRD.

Gregorio Dávila Díaz (DG AGRI) gave an overview of the general outcomes of the Simplified Cost Options (SCO) workshop (19 January 2016) and possible next steps. He emphasised that there have been SCO workshops before, but this was the first workshop with a special focus on LEADER/CLLD.

Articles 67 & 68 of the CPR offer many possibilities but also some challenges. The workshop repeatedly stressed that a 'new mind-set' is needed to implement SCO within LEADER and EAFRD in general, with a focus on results instead of costs. Both the national administrations and the European Commission need to change their approach from that of the previous programming period.

It is very important to have the auditors on board; they were actively involved in the workshop and contributed presentations. It is important to understand the difference between audits of traditional funding approaches (based on expenditure and cost incurred) and audits of SCO based approaches. We have the experience of the ESF which is quite optimistic: no error rates found with SCO.

The three different types of SCOs – lump sum, flat rate and unit cost – apply to LEADER in different ways. For instance, for the preparatory support the lump sum seems a good approach, while for the running and animation cost the flat rate and unit cost approach may be more appropriate. During the workshop the pros & cons of the different models were analysed.

Due to specific provisions of EAFRD, Managing Authorities must come up with a certificate of SCO calculation issued by a third party. At the least the method must be already described in the RDP; the calculations can come at a later stage. Some of the fund-specific restrictions may be changed eventually, but for the time being we have to apply them.

The Commission can further help MS by developing ready-for-use models, e.g. for investment and LEADER. We know some MS, such as Poland which explained its model during the workshop, are working in this area. The review of existing work/models on SCO is in progress. After a first review, DG AGRI found in the RDPs 185 cases of using SCOs, indicating that they are more widespread than was initially thought.

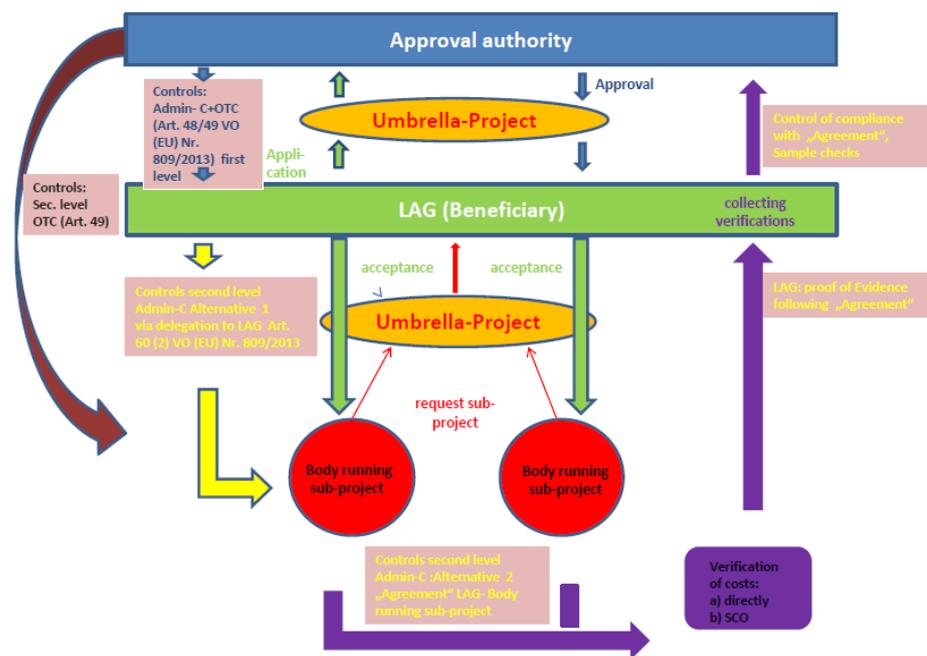
The process that ESF went through when starting to apply SCOs may be useful for the EAFRD. Calculations from already existing national schemes were used for similar beneficiaries and operations; the use of SCOs was then expanded to flat rates for indirect costs based on direct costs. If a Member State decides to use the current 15% rate, it doesn't have to develop a specific method. Only when there is more experience with these simpler SCO methods may it be appropriate to go on to more complicated methods of SCO calculations.

Frank Bartelt:
Facilitation the
implementation of
umbrella projects

Frank Bartelt (MA, DE) presented the outcomes of the workshop on umbrella projects (15 February 2016), organised at the initiative of German, Austrian, Luxembourg and Swedish MAs. During the workshop everyone agreed that the key issue relates to the *ex-ante* approval process of umbrella

projects, especially the aspect of the reasonableness of costs. The Polish MA made it very clear that they need to implement umbrella projects due to the large number of very small projects and the associated administrative burden of their approval. This is where the umbrella project idea could help.

In cases where the MA has delegated the approval functions to the LAG (decentralised model, as mentioned in the CLLD Guidance for local actors, p. 43), the use of umbrella projects have no real benefits.



Under the umbrella project described in the graph, the LAG is formally the beneficiary of the project, it makes an application to the 'approval authority' and receives an official approval. In order for the authority to check the reasonableness of costs of such a project, it may be necessary for the LAG to provide more detail about the sub-projects already at the application stage (and not just generally the topics and overall amount of funding).

The discussion with the Commission's authorities during the workshop made very clear that this was an essential point in the design of umbrella projects.

Therefore ideally the size and financial requirements of the concrete sub-projects that underlie the umbrella project should already be determined. The LAG could bundle together sub-projects with similar objectives and in this way create the umbrella project.

Other approaches, such as first creating the umbrella project and then looking for sub-projects, might also be possible, but in this case it may be more difficult to comply with the demands of Reg (EC) Nr. 809/2014 Art. 48 (2) e (verification of the reasonableness of costs).

During the workshop it was pointed out that checks should be proportionate to the size of the project. The LAG would almost play the role of an approval

authority for the small projects. It must have specific criteria for project selection and should not allocate funding for applicant sub-projects on a 'first come, first served' basis.

PROs: In the case of a large number of small projects, the administrative burden linked in particular to the administrative checks by the Managing Authority/Paying Agency is high, so bundling them under an umbrella project can bring benefits, especially for projects which may cost only a few hundred euros. Moreover, regarding the relation of the LAG to the applicants of the sub-projects, the LAG fulfils a form of an approval function for those small projects, which is important in terms of the main ideas of the LEADER approach.

CONs: The LAG takes on extra administrative burden and financial responsibility. Also, the PA or approval body will have to see whether the sub-project costs are reasonable and eligible, which may prove difficult at the stage of administrative checks on the umbrella project application. The MA needs to provide some kind of facilitation.

It is for the MA to decide how much authority it can give to LAGs to check projects. LAGs could, for example, be tasked with checking whether the sub-projects are eligible or not. In any case, since the LAG is the beneficiary of the umbrella project, it cannot play the role of intermediate body for the administrative checks on the project.

Joanna Gierulska (MA, PL) said Poland is planning to implement umbrella projects in LEADER. The key point is that the LAG is the beneficiary, not the sub-project promoters. This approach is similar to public procurement. A certain amount of information is needed by the LAG on the sub-projects at the application stage (e.g. what are the tasks to be carried out under the project and what are their costs) in order to make the administrative checks possible. In the Polish system the selection of micro-projects is done by LAGs, along with the signing of the contracts with the micro-project promoters. The MA checks and approves the scheme in advance and then carries out checks of the whole umbrella project at the payment claim stage. This makes things simpler for both beneficiaries and the administration.

Frank Bartelt added that this could be an option for experienced LAGs dealing with actors they can trust.

Edina Ocsko and
Charlotta
Heimersson:
“[Territorial
approaches and
networking in
support of social
inclusion](#)”

Edina Ocsko from the ENRD CP introduced the ENRD Workshop on Social Inclusion (scheduled for 17 March in Brussels). The main objective was to discuss opportunities provided by the RDPs for supporting social inclusion in rural areas, with specific focus on the added value of LEADER/CLLD and networking.

Charlotta Heimersson (LAG/NRN, SE) emphasised the importance of integrating immigrants in rural areas, which has become more of a priority issue owing to the current refugee crisis. In her presentation she spoke about what LEADER and NRNs could do. She detailed the Swedish working group on social inclusion and gave some project examples.

Ines Jordana:
Forthcoming
activities on
LEADER
cooperation

Ines Jordana (ENRD CP) provided an update on ENRD's work on supporting transnational cooperation including the development of country fiches and TNC summaries. According to the survey carried out by the CP prior to this meeting, four MAs published calls for projects and 17 are currently working on their application procedures. The ENRD CP will develop information on eligibility criteria in different MS/regions, various models and templates. The ENRD CP encouraged participants to work jointly on this topic. There will be a dedicated section in the next magazine, featuring some Member States and regions working on strengthening cooperation (e.g. the Baltic countries, the Carpathian region and some regionalised Member States such as Spain, the UK regions and Ireland). A workshop will be held in June 2016 on transnational cooperation. Interested LAGs can contact John Grieve (ENRD CP), indicating possible contributions.

The Spanish NRN has established a coordination working group; this was briefly highlighted by the Spanish MA representative during the meeting. The group is supported by the ministry and brings together LAGs to help them understand the needs of MAs. The cooperation group supports the project selection process. A partner search section of the website has also been set up.

Comments and
discussion

Much of the discussion focused on the issue of umbrella projects and, to a lesser extent, SCOs. The following points were raised:

- LAGs are beneficiaries but also actors, combining a 'reactive' approach (receiving applications) and a 'proactive' approach (e.g. by linking proposals between different actors) (Michael Dower, PREPARE),
- umbrella projects can be more difficult to develop, implement and check, but they are very important in activating actors who would not be able to implement projects on their own. There are always costs involved in administrative checks and controls, no matter at which level it takes place, but perhaps for some very small projects this cost is not justified, especially when there is control by the local community (Krzysztof Kwaterna, LAG PL);
- we should simplify things for some very important target groups of LEADER which currently are not effectively reached – e.g. women and entrepreneurs. Most work is still to be done in this area (Luis Fidschuster, NRN AT);
- Estonia is planning to use umbrella projects for youth, but would like to know more about pre-financing (Kristiina Tammets, ELARD/LAG EE);

Joanna Gierulka explained that in Poland under LEADER the national contribution is paid in advance and there are bridging loans for the EAFRD part to facilitate access to funding for small-scale actors.

Many participants raised the issue of harmonising approaches between EAFRD and other ESI Funds. For instance in Finland (according to Laura Jänis, MA) good experience has already been acquired in using lump sums in Structural Funds; perhaps it could be enough to change interpretation of the EAFRD regulation – the article (62.2) that refers to area-based payments may not be appropriate for SCOs. Joanna Gierulka (MA, PL) added that in

general SCO rules should follow the practices deriving from ESF. For instance for business support grants it is not possible to calculate the costs before the scheme is launched.

In Czech Republic there are different approaches to SCO by the MA of different funds. Paradoxically LAGs will have more access to SCO under ERDF and ESF than under EAFRD although they have more experience with this last fund and MA could trust them (Radim Sršen, ELARD/LAG CZ).

Gregorio Dávila Díaz replied that in general DG AGRI intends to harmonise its legislation with that of the other ESI Funds, but it is not clear that a different interpretation of the regulation is possible. Perhaps it will be possible to try to change it, but it will take time. Generally, it is safer to calculate, for example, lump sums in advance, given that they are less likely to be challenged by auditors.

In umbrella projects the administrative checks, including reasonableness of costs, currently must be done at the application stage. We can find ways to handle this task, such as by bundling micro-projects at the stage when they are concrete enough and by standardising the umbrella projects using SCO. There is also a mid-way reference price list, which can be established based on expenditure already paid in previous periods. Regarding the Czech example, once an SCO calculation method is established under one fund (e.g. ERDF or ESF) there is no reason why it should not also be applicable under the EAFRD.

5. Presentation on the Evaluation Helpdesk Thematic Working Group on evaluation of LEADER/CLLD

14.30 – 15.00

Jela Tvrdonova:
[“Thematic Working Group: Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD”](#)

Questions and
Answers

Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided

Jela Tvrdonova from the ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk outlined the rationale for LEADER/CLLD evaluation, the legal basis and the common elements of the monitoring and evaluation system for LEADER, as well as the objectives and timeline of the Thematic Working Group which aims to develop guidance on preparing and implementing the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD at programme and LAG levels.

Jela closed her presentation by asking the participants to respond (in discussion or in writing) to the following questions: “what topics/questions should be specifically evaluated in LEADER/CLLD?”; and “what are the major challenges in evaluating LEADER/CLLD that should therefore be tackled in guidelines?”

Participants raised the following questions and comments:

- how to evaluate the added value of multi-fund approach? How would the guidance link with good practices? (Patrice Collignon, RED);

- one of the challenges is to collect data at LAG level, and for this we need human resources or to automatically collect data (Kristiina Tammets, ELARD);

- LAGs find it difficult to understand monitoring, but the MA is trying to help them; it has to be clearly understood by LAGs, otherwise we'll just create difficulties (Alistair Prior, NRN UK-Scotland);

- one of the ways where LEADER can be most effective is social innovation and governance through partnerships, not just economic development; values such as openness, respect for other people are also important (Luis Fidschuster, NRN AT);

- evaluation needs to fulfil the regulation requirements but also look at the long-term impact of CLLD: empowerment, social capital, capacity building. We need to quantify this better – will it also be addressed by the Working Group? (Jean-Pierre Vercruyse from DG MARE);

Jela Tvrdonova provided the following answers: Guidelines to be developed will also tackle the issue of multi-funds; the TWG will first look at LEADER, but will need to address how the funds are working together to achieve the EU 2020 strategy. Contact with other DGs is planned, via Sounding Board or directly. Good Practices will be taken into account in the process: for instance, there are already LAGs that are conducting independent evaluations.

It's good to collect data automatically but one should not stop at the monitoring level. LAGs have objectives in mind when designing their strategy; evaluation has to look into whether the objectives have been achieved. This is not specified in the regulations, and it is up to the MA to support LAGs in this respect. Evaluations should also assess how LEADER is implemented within RDPs and how this contributes to wider objectives.

Governance and social capital issues will also be addressed. There are certain parts of LEADER evaluation which are mandatory, but its impact as a method, and not only funding source, should be evaluated. In delivery issues such as umbrella projects, SCOs affect the seven features of the LEADER method. These are so closely interlinked that it is a complex issue.

6. Promoting innovation in LEADER/CLLD

15.00 – 16.15

John Grieve:
“[Promoting innovation in LEADER](#)”

M. Ángeles Muriel González: “[Smart LEADER bringing smart specialisation to rural development](#)”

Juha-Matti Markkola:
“[Innovation Camps](#)”

Questions and answers

Interactive exercises

Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided

John Grieve from the ENRD CP introduced the topic of innovation as an essential aspect of the LEADER method. Innovation can be developed at LDS as well as programme level, but it requires a well-planned approach as well as entrepreneurial attitude.

M. Ángeles Muriel González from LAG TAGUS in Extremadura (ES) explained how her LAG became a driver of smart specialisation of the area, based on local assets and on bringing together multiple actors (education system, researchers, public entities, private companies and citizens). A common territorial vision was developed around a product that involves numerous linkages (local cheese) to create an 'innovation ecosystem'. She also presented a short [video](#) explaining the smart specialisation approach.

Juha-Matti Markkola from the Finnish NRN presented the concept of 'innovation camps', a practical way to develop innovation by the intensive meetings of practitioners, which the Finnish NRN organised for the first time in 2012 at the national level (based on an example from Sweden) and since 2013 at the regional level. Some innovation ideas developed by the participants have already been implemented.

Pacôme Elouna Eyenga from EIP-AGRI SP wanted to know why the first call for Operational Groups in Finland was not successful, in spite of the innovation camp methodology. Juha-Matti pointed out that EIP is a new tool and applicants need more support, but hopefully the situation is better now. Juha-Matti also explained that innovation camp participants can come from the area or outside, but the best results are achieved when different types of participants mix together.

John Grieve, in summarising the discussion, pointed out that both these examples are also innovative in terms of processes they use.

The participants then worked together in small groups to identify activities that can be undertaken by MAs, NRNs and LAGs in order to stimulate innovation.

Ideas for what **LAGs** could do:

- Be more entrepreneurial (take the risk, innovate by exploring new ideas, and not by responding to ideas of others who have money).
- Have dedicated resources (a person or institution in the LAG area) to support innovation.
- Attract and bring together as many stakeholders as possible, and use a random method to select LAG members.
- Build a network of innovative people by proactive animation.
- Test and adapt methodologies, including methodologies for monitoring and evaluation of innovation.

- Help young people to love their region by involving them in innovation camps and giving them new experiences in the city or in another country.
- Connect EIP innovation with LEADER innovation and involve farmers in innovation.
- Involve second home owners in the development of the area.

Ideas for what **NRNs** can do:

- Provide links with good practices and promote them (website, advertising, events).
- Involve new people with new ideas, using a variety of tools.
- Look for ways to support EIP implementation in the regions.
- Send civil servants and other national stakeholders (also Commission officials) to live with a rural family, to understand realities for rural enterprises and test their own ideas.
- Organise three-day exchanges for MAs in the working conditions of the LAG.

Ideas for **MAs**:

- Create an enabling framework, supporting exchanges among people at all levels (within and outside MA).
- Adopt a more flexible approach with administrative checks of projects (both by MA and by EC): current regulations do not leave a lot of scope for innovative projects (3% sanctions, reasonableness of costs etc.).
- Ensure that innovation is an important criterion in LDS selection.
- Stimulate LAGs to think about innovation as a process.
- Send civil servants to travelling workshops with NGO representatives to meet rural stakeholders as a 'reality check' and to reaffirm the need for innovation.
- Ensure synergies between LEADER innovation and EIP and expand the LAG's horizon.

Ideas for the **ENRD CP**:

- Remind all stakeholders that innovation includes taking risks by all the actors, from LAG and project promoter to the MA and the EC.
- Develop and disseminate good practices and facilitate extracting project information from the database.
- Organise 15-day mandatory traineeship in LAGs.

Some additional recommendations:

- Innovation is a word that scares people and we need to use something more ordinary that can be achieved at everyone's level
- Job shadowing and job change should be facilitated between MA, PA and LAG, and perhaps there should be obligatory traineeships in LAGs,
- The use of SCO lump sums in EAFRD should be made as simple as in the ESF.

7. Closing comments and next steps

16.15 – 16.30

Closing comments
by Paul Soto, ENRD
CP

Paul Soto, (ENRD CP) said the morning session was packed with technical information that while heavy going was absolutely essential. These are tools allowing LEADER to happen. The afternoon was focused on what LEADER is really all about (the bit that is fun).

The ENRD CP is working on a series of workshops on tools for MAs and PAs, bringing in the audit to address concerns upfront, along with NRNs and LAGs – the whole delivery chain. On the thematic side, the focus is on projects on the ground, and the enabling factors that allow them to happen. The examples presented showed how LAGs can play a role in creating an innovation ecosystem. This is particularly important in rural areas where there isn't a very strong business organisation. Here there is a need for grassroots facilitation to create the ecosystem in which ideas can be translated into action. The potential link between LEADER LAG and OG needs to be kept in mind; they are different but complementary.

We need at least three conditions to be in place:

-A two-way flow of information (up and down).

-A move from top-down to bottom-up activities at EU level, such as the umbrella project initiative. If there are clusters of LEADER stakeholders concerned with a particular issue, they can ask ENRD to help. It does not have to turn into a permanent sub-group, but the point is to react to a real demand on the ground;

-EU level events can reach a limited group of people, so every participant must act as an ambassador. LAG, MA and NRN representatives in the Subgroup should disseminate the meeting outcomes in their countries. The information cannot stay in this room.

Closing comments
by Matthias
Langemeyer

Matthias Langemeyer from DG AGRI emphasised the importance of peer-to-peer exchange during the meeting and thanked the participants for their input and for providing information. The CP is developing a lot of tools, but it can only develop them based on stakeholders input, comments and suggestions.

The interest in umbrella projects is very impressive; such innovative ideas are welcome, and DG AGRI would like to see more of this type of initiative.

Evaluation is not an easy task but nevertheless very important and probably more important now than in the past. LEADER will have to demonstrate its effectiveness to the European Parliament and other decision-makers.

The next LEADER/CLLD subgroup is planned for late September 2016, while the next Rural Networks Steering Group would meet on 4 March and then in October 2016.

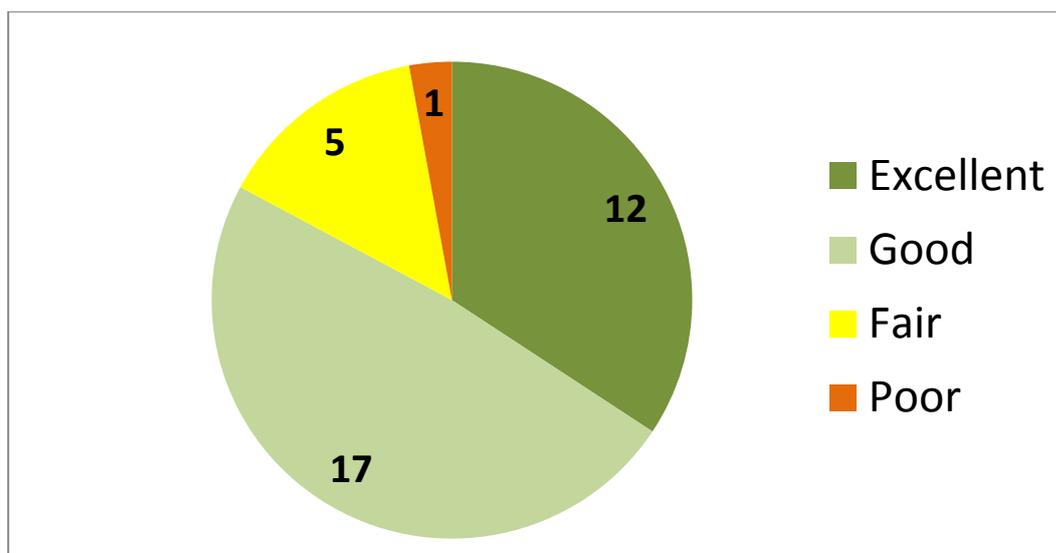
Mr Langemeyer expressed thanks to all the participants and all the service units that contributed to the meeting.

Annex 1 Summary of feedback

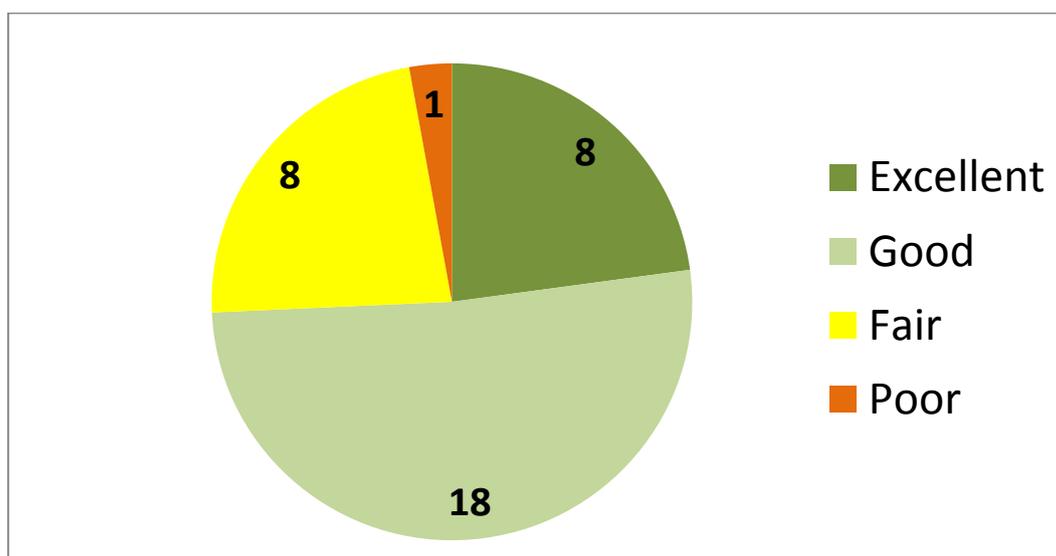
Total number of responses received: 40

1. How would you rate the relevance for your work of:

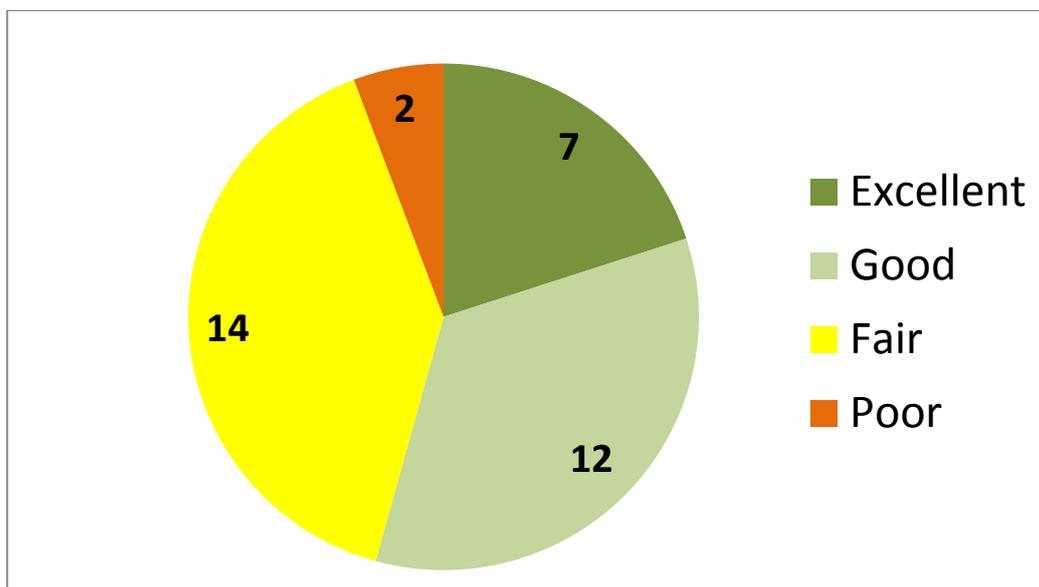
1.1. Information about LEADER/CLLD state of play?



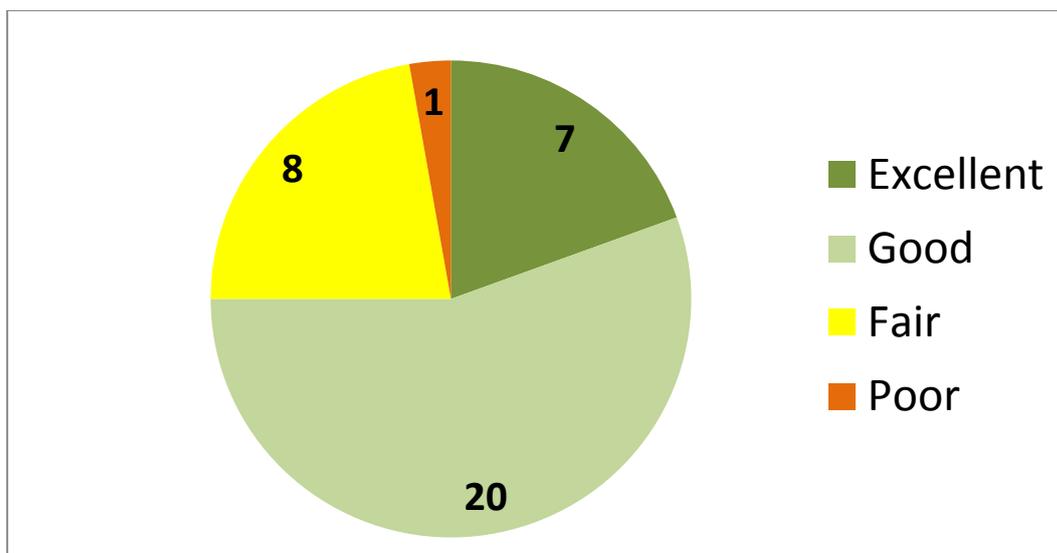
1.2. Presenting potentially useful tools



1.3. Opportunities for exchange and peer learning

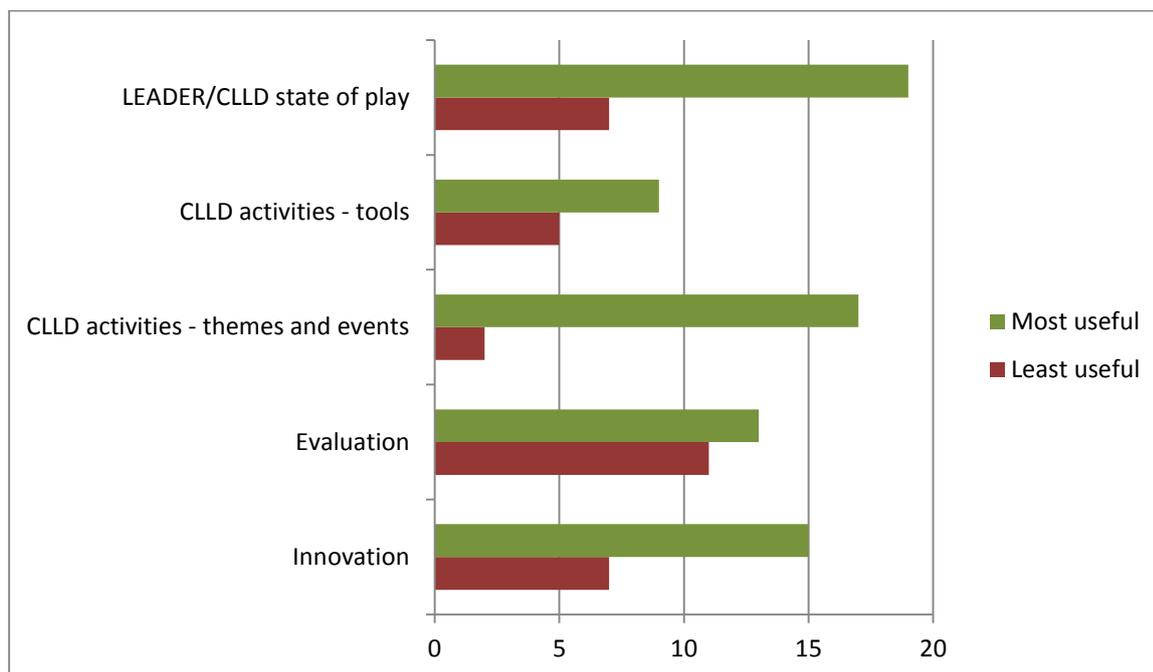


1.4. Overall format of the meeting



2. Which elements of the meeting did you find





3. Comments

3.1. The most important lessons of the meeting:

For many participants the most important message of the meeting related to the **simplification of CLLD delivery and umbrella projects** (six comments), indicating the potential of these methods as well the risks that have to be addressed.

A significant number (five) of comments related to innovation, and many participants were particularly impressed with the presentation on Finnish innovation camps. They also emphasised that administrative complexity can kill innovation.

Several people mentioned **useful information** that they received about the LEADER state of play, LAG database, social inclusion workshop, TNC and evaluation.

One participant insisted on the need to **expand LEADER to CLLD** at all levels: LAGs, MAs, MS and ENRD, European Commission. It is important also at the level of language that we use. Another participant stressed that **LEADER must be fun**.

3.2. The most important aspect to apply in daily work:

Many participants plan to take action about **innovation** (nine responses), in particular by trying to strengthen synergies between LEADER and EIP-AGRI and using LAGs to encourage innovation. Some will try to apply the innovation camp method.

Participants also plan to **disseminate information** presented at the meeting (e.g. about LEADER state of play, innovation camps) to LAGs and other stakeholders (seven responses). Several declare that they intend to make

better use of ENRD tools in the future. They also plan to apply the good practices and information obtained from other participants during the course of informal discussions.

3.3. Topics to be covered in the next meeting:

Interest in discussing **monitoring and evaluation** remains quite high (seven responses), including a presentation of the results of LEADER in the 2007-2013 period.

Some participants would like to gain more in-depth knowledge of **effective CLLD delivery**, including SCOs and umbrella projects. Others would like a presentation of examples of an **urban CLLD** or rural-urban cooperation, as well as more information from other CLLD Funds and networks.

There were several requests to do more work on **LEADER cooperation** (four comments), in particular with third countries. The link between LEADER and EIP-AGRI should be further explored.

Additional proposals include themes such as new governance models, regulation about economic intervention, plans for beyond 2020, as well as a discussion of the gap between theory and practice (in theory LEADER is innovative; in practice bureaucracy makes implementation difficult). In general, there should be opportunities for more and deeper discussion.

3.4. Other comments and suggestions:

Suggestions for the **contents** of further LEADER work include:

- a toolkit for TNC with third countries
- a working group at EU level to develop synergies between LAGs and OG

Suggestions concerning the **format** of the meeting:

- it would be useful to use name plates in discussion, making it easier to identify participants
- PowerPoint presentations should be available as handouts in order to facilitate note-taking
- greater exchange of views from stakeholders should be encouraged, inviting them before the meeting to bring their good practices or ways to overcome difficulties encountered

Other comments:

- "thank you, good meeting again! A little worried about SCO and umbrella project discussions. The [LEADER] goals have been superb, but is it lost in implementation/interpretation?"
- "very interesting agenda with a lot of topics which were discussed in detail (umbrella projects, SCO, innovation)."