

Minutes from the 2nd CLLD Cluster Meeting 27 November 2013, Dijon (France)

1. Introduction to the cluster's work to date & tasks ahead

The meeting started with a self-introduction of the participants, a short description of their main interests concerning the discussions about CLLD and an update of the state of the decisions on CLLD within their Member State.

Some of the participants reported that no final decision concerning CLLD has been taken in their countries. Others provided information on the possible scenarios that will be applied in their countries: for instance, in Lithuania and Scotland the implementation of CLLD will probably involve the EAFRD and the EMFF, Slovakia will probably make use of the EAFRD and the ERDF, and Hungary will probably utilize all Structural Funds for CLLD.

Participant's **main reported interests** were:

- The difficulties in implementing and organizing multi-funded CLLD;
- How to help LAGs in designing integrated strategies, especially if these are supported by two funds (EAFRD & EMFF) only;
- Selection criteria for strategies and LAG selection.

After the participants' introduction, the meeting continued with a presentation on the work of the cluster to date. The thematic discussions of the meeting were then organized in 3 consecutive sections:

- Working Group A: Demonstrating the added value of the CLLD approach in addressing social, economic and environmental issues;
- Working Group B: Administrative structure & cooperation of funds (useful practices intermediate bodies);
- Working Group C: Criteria for LAG selection and LDS evaluation.

2. Working Group A: Demonstrating the added value of the CLLD approach in addressing social, economic and environmental issues

CLLD Cluster highlighted that it is very important to **reflect on the added value of LEADER/CLLD**. Although LEADER has been implemented already for many years, what can be achieved through its method is **still not fully recognized**. The added value of the LEADER method is not strongly acknowledged, especially in fields such as social development and the environment.

Edina Ocsko (ENRD CP) highlighted (based on her experience from a conference she attended recently) that many community developers and workers (including NGOs working in the field of community-led development), are often critical towards the achievements and efficiency of LEADER. While the potential of the LEADER approach is often widely

recognized, LEADER has been criticized for becoming politicized and funding-driven in some countries, often losing contact with local communities and real bottom-up initiatives.

The presentation by *Geza Gelencser*, manager of the Hungarian LAG Koppány-Valley, showed how the possibility to develop bottom-up strategies based on the **specific needs in local areas** (through LEADER) has been particularly important for **Eastern European countries**; where 'historical heritage' often created unique development needs (characteristic only to these countries). CLLD gives the opportunity to address social, economic and environmental issues through tailor-made strategies, in an efficient way.

A second presentation by *Alistair Prior*, from the Scottish Rural Network, highlighted how LEADER can be an efficient tool to foster the creation and use of **Short Supply Chains** (SSC). Support provided by LEADER (and a multi-funded approach in particular) can largely contribute to the development of SSC (and to increasing the value of local food products) that otherwise would not be promoted (from a politician's perspective "it is easier to organize big companies than many small ones").

- **Discussion:**

The discussion focused on the following main points:

- **Knowledge and skills development of LAGs and its members** is an important issue. The development and implementation of local development strategies require specific knowledge and skills, and therefore there is a need for capacity building. However, the level of experience and capacity of LAGs vary largely across Europe. For instance, LAGs (such as PLANED in Wales, also represented at the cluster meeting) accumulated a lot of knowledge through being involved in several generations of LEADER, and now works with a highly skilled team.
- **Demonstrating the added value** of LEADER is a difficult task and should not only be based on 'successes' but also on the analysis of **LEADER 'mistakes'**. A critical view to LEADER implementation until now would be a good health check.
- **The weaknesses of LEADER** (some 'failures') should be taken into considerations: on the one hand, learning from mistakes creates an opportunity to develop LEADER further; and on the other hand presenting such mistakes gives floor to criticisms (i.e. public money not wisely spent) which may result in a painful loss of opportunities and a loss of money for the LAGs and the communities.
- In order to understand and communicate LEADER and CLLD added value it is also necessary to understand and demonstrate **'what LAGs could have achieved if they could have had access to other funds'** than the EAFRD. The added value of the multi-funding approach and, in a broader sense, of LEADER approach lies in their ability of providing the right tools (that allow rural development implementers to address the local needs).

Some further comments raised by participants include

- *Anna Parizan* (Hungarian Ministry, MA): In Hungary, one of the biggest problems is the **lack of time**. There is often **no time to communicate with other MAs**. In order

to overcome the lack of communication, working groups with key stakeholders were organized. At the same time it has to be acknowledged that the final decision always stays with the politicians (i.e. stakeholder consultations may only be partly taken into account).

- *Kirsten Birke Lund* (ELARD): We need to exchange and know about each others' approaches and problems. It is important to **increase trust**, create a system that can work and **convince politicians that things work**. Among others the relationship between agriculture and rural development should be further discussed.
- *David Wilford* (Defra, England): Farmers could be more involved in the activities of LAGs from the beginning.

3. Which integrated territorial approaches? (*Participation at the Forum organised by the French NRN on CLLD during their event 'Rural areas take their own destiny in hand!'*).

The Forum provided the opportunity for many stakeholders to provide their point of view on CLLD. **Some of the ideas** mentioned during the interventions in the debate include:

- LEADER method is widely known and is not a 'news' anymore, the new thing is CLLD;
- LEADER and CLLD from the Commission point of view are two different tools given to the territories. CLLD is a non-compulsory tool for local development managed by local actors through support from different funds. LEADER on the contrary is compulsory (5% of the RDP) and is focuses explicitly on rural areas for rural issues;
- It's important not to miss the opportunity that CLLD represent: a more active approach from everybody is needed in order to find a way to simplify the use of the funds and to set up the new CLLD method.
- The possibility to integrate urban and rural cities in CLLD strategies will depend on the definition of 'cities' and 'rural areas', on the size of each territory and also on the national budget available.
- Although CLLD implementation is not an easy task "it shouldn't be too hard to implement because someone already did it" in the past. Problems are horizontal and therefore territorial approaches to solve these problems need a transversal reply using multi-funding.
- Simplification rules and standard simplification procedures should be considered more closely because they could help considerably the MSs.

4. Working Group B: Administrative structure & cooperation of funds (useful practices intermediate bodies)

A short presentation by *Magdalena Mach*, (Polish Ministry of Agriculture, MA), showed how **CLLD will be organized in Poland**. The Partnership Agreement will leave open the opportunity to implement single or multi-funded local development strategies (LDSs). The **final decision on the use of CLLD** will be made independently by each of the Polish 16 regions. Every region will set up a committee with the power of selecting the LDSs and the LAGs. The committees' work will be based on common procedures and criteria for LDS selection. Horizontal rules and coordination structure necessary to harmonize the work of

the different funds will be prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture in close cooperation with the Ministry of Regional Development.

- **Discussion**

The discussion focused on the following main points:

- The minimum number of population covered by the LAG in Poland will be increased to 30 000 - as a consequence the number of LAGs will decrease. Possible **cut in the RDP budget** may also affect the number of Polish LAGs.
- It is left to the 16 regions to organize the LAGs in their territories. Regions will have the opportunity to decide for their territories whether and how to organize CLLD. Currently there are indications that **CLLD might be implemented in 3 regions**.
- Urban areas in some cases will be covered by CLLD strategies. CLLD in urban areas will be mainly implemented through **support from the ESF and the ERDF** resources.

5. Working Group C: Criteria for & LAG selection and LDS evaluation

The Portuguese NRN launched a questionnaire concerning the selection criteria for LAGs and LDSs. During working group C *Ana Pires da Silva* (Portuguese NRN) gave a presentation on the results of the survey. 14 MSs answered to the survey concerning topic such as 'institutions involved in the LAG and LDS selection', 'main selection criteria and priority LDS themes'.

- **Discussion**

The discussion recognized that the Portuguese survey has been a **valuable exercise**. At the same time participants also highlighted that this survey '**came too early**'; and it would be particularly interesting to launch again the survey at a later stage (i.e. when most MS are engaged with redefining their LAG and LDS selection criteria and methodologies).

Participants from the LAG PLANED and the Scottish MA highlighted that their MS already produced or will provide specific monitoring and evaluation indicators guidelines.