



2nd LEADER Subcommittee Brussels, 28/4/09

**“Strategy for LEADER during 2007-
2013: objectives, tools,
perspectives”**

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(ELARD)*



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European LEADER
Association for Rural
Development-aisbl



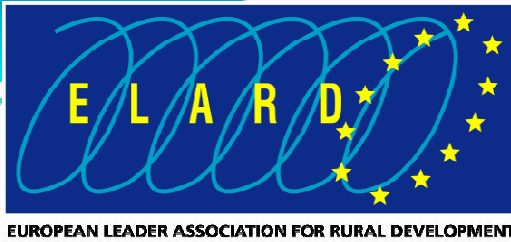
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What is ELARD?

1. International non-profit organization, founded in 1999 by five National LEADER Networks or associations of LEADER groups that have been set up or have emerged informally at **local, regional or national level** in some Member States :
 - *French LEADER Network; Greek LEADER Network;*
 - *Irish LEADER Network; Italian LEADER Network; Spanish LEADER Network;*
2. Today, ELARD by expanding its members is representing more than **600 Local Action Groups** through national and regional voluntary networks in:
 - *France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Ireland, North Ireland, United Kingdom, Belgium, Sweden, Finland, Czech Republic, Latvia, Hungary;*
3. In contact with Rural Networks in *Slovenia, Lithuania,*



ELARD aims

- **ELARD aims** today to :
 - support rural and regional development based on LEADER philosophy;
 - promote experience exchange, sharing information and cooperation activities through its members, partners and European Institutions;
 - influence European Policy on rural development taking in account the regional strength of local areas in Europe;
 - To serve as a forum for the LAG's, the various NGO, rural groups and other organisations that wish to exchange their views and experiences on rural development and the future of rural areas in Europe;



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ELARD aims

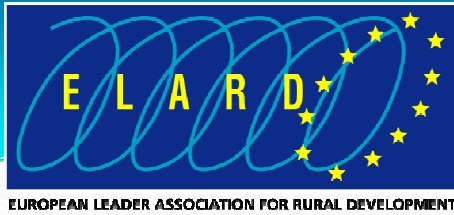
- To serve as a link with similar networks and institutions that work towards an integrated rural development;
- To support the partners/members in their efforts to carry out innovatory actions in the field of rural development;
- To organise meetings and thematic conferences between different Local Action Groups (LAGs) at European level;
- To encourage initiatives that will lead to cooperation;



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- The character of ELARD as **informal network unit** being more of a **lobbying function**;
 - *to represent the **interests** of its members and to ensure effective representation of rural interests;*
 - *to play the role of **interface** between the actors and the decision makers at national and European level ;*
 - *to be a strong and **influential** partner;*
 - *and be able to have a **direct** bearing on policy development;*
- Offices in Brussels: 59, Av. D' Auderghem, 1040 Brussels
Tel/Fax: +32(0) 2 230 13 53, E-mail:
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What results and bottlenecks up to now?

- **Results:**

1. LEADER approach mainstreamed in the institutional framework of Community RD Policy 2007 - 2013.
2. Financial issues:
 - EAFRD total budget : € 90.8 billion
 - EAFRD funding for the LEADER Axis 4. : € 5.4 billion (6%) ← **insufficient budget** to satisfy the **increased demand for LEADER** coming from the enlargement/expansion of **eligible rural areas**.
 - *Implications:*
 - selection of too many local programmes with low budget to guarantee implementation of integrated programme at local level and the sustainability of LAG's as delivery mechanism in remote rural areas;
 - “mergers” of local programmes (and LAG's) based on budgetary and administrative criteria and not on territorial approach, dominates the



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What results and bottlenecks up to now?

3. Delays in progress of LAG's selection:

- Expected number of LAGs to be selected: 2.125
- Number of LAGs already selected: 1.295

- **bottlenecks**

1. Main issues affecting roll-out of LEADER so far relate to the effect of mainstreaming LEADER in the delivery mechanism;

- LEADER 'bottom up approach' is questioned by the ongoing administrative procedures being issued.
- Changes to the operating rules are resulting in a more rigid programme which may be proved as not effective on the ground.



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What results and bottlenecks up to now?

- Relationship of Managing Authorities (MA), Paying Agencies (PA) and LEADER LAGs show worrying signals about the dominant bureaucracy over LAGs.

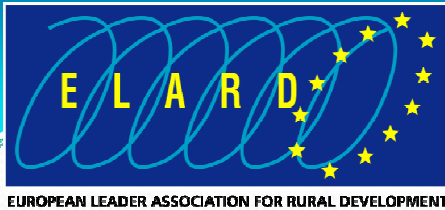
2. It seems that economic recession will affect the implementation of LEADER as negatively as any other State Aid programme.

- the economic downturn being experienced throughout the EU put rural areas more at risk as there are fewer opportunities available to people than there are in cities and towns.
- In a time that public funds are limited and the banks are reluctant to increase money flow to the real economy, will result a “stalling” development on the ground.



How LEADER is mainstreamed?

- There is little evidence so far that the programme has been mainstreamed;
- What LEADER method can offer to the overall RD programming is:
 - Territorial approach;
 - LEADER has improved the organizational capacity of the rural areas;
 - The innovating character is another underlying principle of LEADER identity;
 - The networking activities;
 - The cooperation has extended the horizon of rural areas;



Networking in the Context of LEADER

- Networking has played a significant role under LEADER approach;
- The work of both LEADER Support Units and of the LEADER voluntary networks of LAGs where established has been a vital source of support;
- Networks with their representation potential and territorial presence can be an effective complementary instrument;
- Networking, must encouraged in all RD Axis;



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What activities for NRN's in this context?

1. The NRN key role is to enlist the energy of all stakeholders in the rural development process. The stakeholders are all those people, enterprises and organizations who have a stake in the countryside and who can contribute to the implementation of the Rural Development Programme;
2. The NRN may help in disseminating LEADER method to all axis of RD Programming;
3. The NRN must contribute to the genuine application of programs and measures of the RD programme;
4. The NRN must be the frame of promotion of innovating and creative ideas;
5. The NRN can also help by supporting LAG's, in facilitating MA and PA authorities to have a better understanding of what is required to successfully operate and implement the LEADER programme;



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How EN RD can help?

- It is expected that the ENRD will be an integrated system destined to fortify alliances in rural space;
- ENRD together with the National Rural Networks must promote the necessary actions, towards a greater recognition of rural means, encouraging its value and its visibility in the set of the society;
- ENRD should gather and share EU level info on LEADER differences and similarities in MS, best practices, contact-building seminars, and publications.
- ENRD should facilitate transnational LEADER partnerships within and outside of the EU;
- ENRD should initiate the revaluation of the rural territories definition;



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Thank you for your attention!