



Outcomes: Extended Leader subcommittee – 5th meeting

12 November, 2010
Brussels

CONNECTING RURAL EUROPE

GENERAL ACTION POINT

Agenda Item	<p>Welcome address and introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The meeting was opened by Rob Peters (DG AGRI G3). Rob Peters confirmed that the meeting would focus upon the results of the work undertaken by the 3 LsC Focus Groups (FGs), established since November 2009 and whose reports were circulated prior to the meeting. A particular welcome was extended to the representatives of approximately 40 LAGs invited to the meeting to provide a practitioners perspective in the discussions on the FG findings and recommendations. Rob Peters also confirmed that the meeting will also review options for wider dissemination of the results of the FGs findings to relevant stakeholders.
1st Presentation Link	<p>Update on Leader implementation in EU Member States,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>The European Commission</u> provided statistics relating to the current state of play of Leader in the EU Member States, noting that there are currently 2,192 selected LAGs in the EU. In 2010 an acceleration in project approval and budget spending has been noticed. Since the beginning of the programming period 31,281 local projects and 598 cooperation projects have been approved; However, only €366 million has been spent on projects so far, representing 6.4% of planned expenditure. For TNC approved projects, MAs were encouraged to send their notifications to the Commission (SFC 2007 information exchange tool) in order to provide a clear and complete picture of the approval of TNC projects. <p>http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=5A9003E9-C503-E96B-AE7E-EC54BB6C4DC3</p>
2nd Presentation Link	<p>Update on the EN RD website tools regarding Leader,</p> <p>Judit Torok & Dieter Wagner, CP EN RD</p> <p>To be revised</p>
Discussion Points	<p>During the short exchange with LAGs on first experiences regarding EN RD website tools two main questions were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participants expressed the need for improved access to EN RD Cooperation tools and to the EN RD website, ideally in multiple EU languages;
Action Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was confirmed that the French language version of the EN RD website will be available by the end of 2010 and that other EU languages will be available. For some of the cooperation tools access points for uploading data are intended to be translated and available in 2011.
3rd Presentation links	<p>Focus group 1: Implementation of the bottom-up principle: decision-making process and mainstreaming</p> <p>Overview of the outcomes of the extended report, Panagiotis Patras, ELARD</p> <p>http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=5A90063A-ECED-1676-205F-</p>

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Specific aspects on the implementation of Leader: Running costs, complex & small scale projects, [Raffaella Di Napoli, NRN Italy](#)

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=5A9008A6-0683-B787-FF12-9D54DD9E208D

Discussion Points

The work of FG1 was generally appreciated by the audience. The LAGs confirmed the conclusions of the focus groups reports. Their interventions focused on the following issues: Leader approach is neglected in the measure-based implementation; there is a lack of priority given to animation/development work of LAGs; 3% sanction after controls is an obstacle to take risks in innovative projects, implementation procedure and rules are established or revised too late in the programming period, EU public procurements rules should not apply to any project, overlap of LAG action with the activities of other local bodies, volunteers are discouraged by bureaucratic excessive rules.

The general feeling was expressed by the audience of a progressive loss of the specificities of the Leader approach as a result of mainstreaming. The need to assess the impact of Leader by means of qualitative evaluation (as opposed to purely quantitative evaluation focusing on the financial implementation of individual measures) was highlighted.

Advances for LAG running costs: the annuality of advance payment, as implemented in certain RDPs, is perceived as a financial constraint. A specific request was put forward for the EC to draw a clear line between running costs (for a 20% ceiling applies – according to article 38 of EC Regulation n. 1974/2006) and costs related to the animation and acquisition of skills within the territory. Given the importance of the activities put in place for animation of stakeholders within the territory, an adequate level of qualified human resources is necessary in order for LAGs to act a development agency at local level

Small scale projects : Applicants for small-scale projects face difficulties in ensuring the co-financing' coverage'. The non-eligibility of advances for small scale non-investment projects (e.g. training) under EU rules is an issue in particular for NGOs. Currently advanced payments are only possible for (physical) investments. This is a handicap for small projects for which other costs predominate. LAGs should play their part in putting in place an adequate system of financial management, but this can only be done if rules at European and national levels are clear and simplified. Several examples of good collaboration between the MA and the LAGs were underlined (eg Leader manager to assist several LAGs as part of the MA in DE-Bavaria, regular meetings in NL).

Action Points

- the main action point proposed was the update of the 2006 EC Guide on the Leader axis to guide and improve future implementation.
- It clearly emerged that the application of the three models identified depends very much on the national and regional laws and procedures. It was proposed that the three models should all be promoted in the future to encourage and enhance the bottom-up approach.

4th Presentation link

Focus group 2: Preserving the innovation/experimental character of Leader: difficulties identified and good practices

Overview of the outcomes of the extended report including a case study,

[Marieke Koot, NRN Netherlands](#)

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=5A900B8D-91E2-92C9-B526-17E819C756AE

Discussion Points	<p>Main comments made by the participants were focused on the following aspects of the FG 2 group's work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants confirmed that 'innovation' should always be regarded in a <u>local context in which Local Action Groups play a key knowledge and facilitating role</u>. Therefore criteria for innovative projects should be established at local level preferably in the local development strategy. • Innovation is not often successful as in many situations it <u>does not fit into standardised measures and financial procedures</u>. The <u>need to review the selection and financial procedures</u> was acknowledged, allowing more flexibility regarding innovative and risky projects in order to give them a chance to be successful and enhance stakeholders' motivation at local level. All rural development stakeholders involved in the decision-making and implementation process of innovation should share a common view of the added value of innovative projects at local level and find solutions to support innovation; in that respect acceptance of <u>failures under control rules</u> are key ingredients to support and promote innovation in rural areas. • Innovation follows a <u>long-term process of development</u>; it takes time to be adopted and therefore requires more flexible procedures/criteria of selection and monitoring. LAG should contribute to the 2020 EU strategy goals related to smart growth • Innovation is also dependent upon a <u>multi-stakeholders approach</u> and therefore can be enhanced within a transnational cooperation context that brings new ideas and creativity. • LAG facilitation role towards project promoters with new ideas should be better recognized; <p>A case study "Regional Mixed Farm" from the LAG South East Drenthe, one of the collected innovative projects, was presented showing that a conventional farming sector (milk production) can innovate. A closed regional cycle system was established <u>combining feed and milk production</u>.</p>
Action Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To better reflect and disseminate the diversity of innovative approaches it was suggested to enhance the <u>collection of innovative practices/experiences</u> in the diverse rural areas of the EU supported by Leader to be further disseminated on EN RD website. • the 2006 EC Guide on the Leader axis will be revised to give a better guidance on innovation support.
5 th Presentation Link	<p>Focus group 3: Implementation of the "cooperation" measure: key bottlenecks and solutions</p> <p>Overview of the outcomes of the report & LAG/project holder management practice & MA/PA administrative practice regarding the definition of common action, the funding of common costs and key areas for cooperation projects, Ave Bremse, NRN Estonia & Juha-Matti Markkola, NRN Finland http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=5A900DB2-0AB2-C839-0DF3-2307867D2948</p> <p>Case Ihana: Sailing training and maritime heritage project on the Baltic Sea P. Rinne, LAG Finland http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=5A901079-ABC3-BC5D-11C3-0074E7C55EEC</p>
Discussion Points	<p>The audience provided the following comments and suggestions on the specific issues highlighted by the work of the group:</p>

- There is a great diversity of practice in TNC. It would be useful to identify them and disseminate the lessons learned.
- To mobilise Cooperation it is necessary to visualise the, often intangible benefits and added value of cooperation. Cooperation is not an option, but a key ingredient and hence an integral part of the implementation of the local development strategy.
- It is vital to foresee programme support for the preparation of cooperation projects, mainly through financial support for preparatory meetings as this allows potential partners to get to know each other personally, to exchange experience, to inspire each other and to build the trust required for jointly developing ideas and implementing projects.
- Further support to Cooperation is provided by NRN initiatives, e.g. through consultation and mentoring networks, which facilitate the exchange between those less and more experienced in Cooperation. Lessons learned are shared, thus helping to avoid the repetition of mistakes made in the past. Topics include the importance for LDS implementation to timely launch Cooperation activity and central aspects of project preparation, such as common costs planning.
- The introduction of higher public support was presented as another way to successfully promote Cooperation.

Action Points

- The FG3 findings were welcomed by the enlarged LsC, acknowledging that they offer a starting point for simplifying Cooperation and for raising its attractiveness to rural actors. It was suggested to utilise the findings further at European level for consideration when developing the future rural development programme framework.
- The challenge that the involvement of multiple programme authorities in the implementation of the Cooperation measure represents was acknowledged. The importance of the information established as a result of the efforts made by the participants of FG3 was confirmed and Managing Authorities were encouraged to continue to contribute and to make suggestions for simplification in response to the bottlenecks that were identified (to be linked to EN RD TWG 4 activities).
- The country fiches under the EN RD TNC guide describing the rules and procedure applying to each programme still need to be completed for 11 MS.
- With more than 2200 LAGs in place, the EN RD can make its contribution for LAGs to have opportunity to get to meet or to get to know each other, in particular through the organisation of events and the dissemination of project examples on its website.

Afternoon agenda

+ 6th Presentation
Links

Round up of Focus Groups and next steps dissemination of focus groups reports, P.

Van Doren, the Contact Point

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=5A90134D-025A-6654-22E3-D7EFB25177D4

Forthcoming EN RD and NRN Leader events and discussion, Riin Saluveer DG AGRI

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=5A8FFEFA-F9D2-F3DD-B0E1-2D20BE559F7F

Action Points

- The Commission concluded that the Focus Groups have fulfilled their mandate. Their reports and other specific results will be disseminated through the website of

the EN RD. Outcomes have demonstrated improved levels of cooperation between Managing Authorities and Local Action Groups. Several programmes have been modified taking into account recommendations of the focus groups. At EU level the 2006 Guide on the Leader axis will be revised to improve the implementation and promote good practices.

- Further time for reflection is needed how to benefit from and take further the results, in particular with regards to the next programme planning period, for which the conclusions of the post-2013 CAP consultation can be expected soon, in preparation for next year's programme and budget framework preparations.
- As a first step, concrete suggestions can be formulated on the basis of today's results, for presentation to the Coordination Committee and for general discussion throughout the EN RD.
- The suggestion to transform the three focus groups into a new new focus group supported by the Contact Point was made, which would advise the Member States with regards to the current and the next programming period, to improve the efficiency of the Leader Approach. This option and others may be further explored at the next Leader sub-committee
- The next Leader subcommittee will also take a closer look at the Leader+ findings of the European Court of Auditors and at the results of the Leader+ ex post evaluation.