



Report of the Outcomes of 8th LEADER Sub-Committee meeting

31 May 2012
Brussels, Belgium

Compiled by the ENRD Contact Point



Connecting Rural Europe

Contents

Welcome and Introduction	1
Session: Focus Group 4 on "Better Local Development Strategies (LDS)"	1
Session: Update on transnational cooperation (TNC).....	2
Session: What next? What can we still do in this programming period to support LEADER?	4

<p>Agenda Item</p>	<p>Welcome and Introduction by José- Manuel Sousa Uva, DG AGRI</p>
<p>Agenda Item</p>	<p>Session: Focus Group 4 on "Better Local Development Strategies (LDS)"</p>
<p>Presentation</p>	<p>Presentation of the draft conclusions of Focus Group 4, by Petri Rinne (FG4 Co-chair)</p> <p>To view the presentation click here</p> <p>Petri Rinne, one of the co-chairs of the FG4 on Better Local Development Strategies, presented the main highlights of the FG4 final draft report. The report was made available to participants prior to the meeting under on opENRD. The presentation covered results coming from both phases of the FG4 work and dealt with aspects linked to the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of Local Development Strategies (LDS).</p>
<p>Discussion Points</p>	<p>The main discussion points were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over the last 20 years similar conclusions regarding findings on M&E have been noted, namely that there is a need to find smarter LEADER-specific indicators to measure the LEADER added value and LDS performance. It is an on-going issue that should now be dealt with. • Iterative LDS development is very important and in some Member States (MS) it is already a practice. There needs to be a partnership and communication (step-by-step dialogue) between the MA and the LAGs. • It is crucial to invest more in educating and developing stakeholder capacity ahead of the next programming period. • Some MS expressed their fear that LEADER may become more top-down than bottom-up in the light of the proposed multi-fund approach in the next period.
<p>Action Points</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final FG4 report should be available at the end of June via the ENRD website and results are to be shared according to the communication and dissemination plan of the FG4.
<p>Poster Presentations</p>	<p>Better LDS poster session by Ana Pires da Silva (FG 4 Co-chair, PT NRN), Leena Anttila (FI MA), Petri Rinne (FG4 Co-chair, ELARD), John Grieve (FG4 expert, ENRD CP), Marjo Lehtimäki (FI LAG), Michael Gregory (ENRD CP).</p> <p>To view the posters click here</p>
<p>Discussion Points</p>	<p>Panel and open discussion on FG4 findings and next steps (dissemination and use)</p> <p>The main discussion points were:</p> <p>Where do you see relevance of the FG4 results to the present programming period?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FG4 members articulated that the focus of the FG4 work has shifted to preparation for the next programming period. The question was raised if there is still flexibility to use the recommendations and findings in the current period? • Several members of the LEADER Sub-Committee (LSC) confirmed that it is possible, especially where the LDS needed to be revised. • DG AGRI emphasized that the use of FG4 results is important and should not be

underestimated. It is very important that the effectiveness of the current strategies be presented in order to clearly demonstrate the added value of the present work.

- DG AGRI highlighted the fact that there are still 3 years of implementation ahead. FG4 findings and recommendations relating to M&E practices and self-evaluation can be applied in the current period. These practices provide knowledge in order to prepare better for the next period. Also, it is important to remember that some MS have only just finished their LAG selection procedures and they could really make significant use of the FG4 findings; e.g. Romania and Bulgaria. These countries were late with LEADER and now they need to rush in order to implement the LDS in 3 years, therefore relevant practices are very useful for them.
- Findings on M&E have high relevance for both the present and future programmes, especially as M&E was not sufficiently built into many LDS. There is still space for learning and improving, which needs to start now. Capacity building for the future programming period also needs to begin now and to be pursued later on to address gaps.

Communication and dissemination of results:

- It was proposed that the results of the LSC FGs 1, 2 & 3 should also be taken forward and more widely disseminated and used. FG4 has a clear communication and dissemination strategy but the previous LSC FG results did not benefit from a similar approach to the same extent.
- Regarding communication and dissemination in general, it is important to highlight that the LAGs are not only recipients of the information, but also vectors and multipliers of information.
- Some MS are already preparing or are about to prepare their planning for LEADER events (incl. training). The ENRD CP invited representatives to inform them in order to better plan for and know how these events can be supported.
- The role of the National Rural Networks (NRNs) in relation to ensuring partnership and exchange between implementing bodies and the LAGs was highlighted as was their key role in the dissemination of results. The LEADER Gateway on the ENRD website was recognised as an important tool. Networks have different capabilities to support actions therefore efforts to support their 'leveling-up' are important. Results need to be distributed more widely with various tools: be it online (web-based) offline (publications) or action-based (mentoring, training, peer-to-peer actions).

Agenda Item

Session: Update on transnational cooperation (TNC)

Presentation

Update on TNC notified projects and Feedback from LEADER event, by Kasia Panfil (ENRD CP), Jean-Michel Courades (DG AGRI)

To view the presentation [click here](#)

An updated state-of-play of notified cooperation projects was presented (updated from the last LSC) together with feedback regarding the TNC aspects of the LEADER event held at the end of April 2012. As of May 2012, 240 approved TNC projects were notified to the EC via the SFC2007 tool. Regarding the feedback form, at the LEADER event, a total of 72 TNC offers were discussed and 40 meetings took place with 151 LAG participants. There was a LEADER consultation desk, run by DG AGRI, during the event where there were discussions regarding difficulties with TNC implementation. These difficulties included: in some MS there is no longer a budget available for such cooperation; differences between MS in the timing of the decision-making process and lengthy procedures; and differences in eligibility criteria for cooperation partners.

The LEADER event follow-up plan was presented. Its two main objectives are: to monitor the exact number of projects established after the event and to provide specific support for LAGs that still have difficulties to find a partner.

Discussion Points

The main discussion points were:

- Consultation with or between MAs about cooperation could be a part of the solution (to the problems noted above).
- An on-going application procedure which is used in the majority of RDPs instead of "periodic calls with application" is facilitating and simplifying the process of synchronisation of the selection process.
- For now, the focus should continue on the present programming period. According to Article 39.4 of Regulation n°(EC) 1974/2006, projects may be submitted to the competent authority by the 31 December 2013 at the latest.
- Specific budget allocations to run and coordinate the projects could help, given that this is a very demanding task. If a LAG only has limited resources but has to run a large-scale project, the task can become unmanageable.

Presentations

Thematic focus and strategic importance of cooperation:

Thematic analyses of the Finnish TNC projects by Juha-Matti Markkola (FI NRN)

To view the presentation [click here](#)

The finish NRN gave an overview of transnational cooperation projects in Finland in the previous and the current programming period, for which there is still a lot of work to be done in order to reach the objectives set at the beginning of the period. (The goal was 300 projects for the whole period and at the moment 42 approved TNCs exist). Lessons learnt from Finland were; firstly that bureaucracy could be made easier, and secondly the importance of connecting partners. Seminars are one of the best places to start cooperation projects and find partners, thus thematic seminars are needed to promote TNC.

Colmcille/Columba Challenge project by Andrew Ward (IE LAG- Inishowen Development Partnership)

To view the presentation [click here](#)

This presentation showed how cooperation between two regions (Inishowen (IE) and Argyll Islands (UK-Scotland) overcame the geographical and political isolation by developing a plan for cooperation in the form of a specific project on the Colmcille Challenge and Sea Festivals on both 'sides' or the partnership on July 2011.

Cheviot Futures- cooperation over climate change- inter-territorial project by Tom Burston (UK, Northumberland Uplands LAG) and Jennifer Hewitson (Cheviot Futures Project Officers)

To view the presentation [click here](#)

The strategic importance of cooperation and its thematic importance was highlighted. The LAG chose to tackle climate change issues via a cooperation project called Cheviot Futures which was presented to the LSC. In this project, partners from both sides of the border (England and Scotland, UK) work together to adapt to climate change, bring together land managers and policy makers in order to share learning and to create a network and build links between partners.

Agenda Item

TNC Discussion – 'Putting TNC into a strategic context'

<p>Discussion Points</p>	<p>Brief summary of points from the previous session were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation is a key tool to implement LDS objectives. LAGs need to be encouraged to better link TNC with the LDS, to be more effective and more strategic. The idea of a cooperation strategy as a component of the overall LAG strategy was raised. TNC projects provide the possibility to break down the geographical isolation of communities and TNC can be used as a tool to address strategic issues such as adaptation to climate change and improving resilience of areas. • There is still a huge potential for transnational cooperation under the present programming period: There are 240 TNC projects notified, but this is a relatively low number given that there are around 2,300 LAGs in Europe. <p>The main discussion points were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of promotion and communication about LEADER and TNC; more marketing and awareness-raising is needed. The European dimension of the programme should be promoted. Some mentioned that local populations do not always recognise the importance of the European dimension. Most cooperation is initiated by LAG managers and other local stakeholders can feel that they are asked to do too much. • Issues related to different rules and bureaucracy among the Member States were repeatedly raised, a 'fast-track' for TNC projects in the selection process was suggested. • Capacity building is crucial for TNC. When implementing a cooperation project, its complexity increases and it requires a lot of skills and effort (to plan, prepare and deliver). Systematic exchange of LAG staff (such as the initiative from ELARD) could be a solution to promote this. • Tools (such as the cooperation database and other on-line resources) are useful but cannot replace people. The NRNs role to actively promote and facilitate cooperation between LAGs remains important here.
<p>Agenda Item</p>	<p>Session: What next? What can we still do in this programming period to support LEADER?</p>
<p>Presentations</p>	<p>ENRD Year 5 – Initial proposals for LEADER (including enhancement of the LEADER Gateway and forthcoming LEADER-related events and 2012 Open Days) by Donald Aquilina (ENRD CP)</p> <p>To view the presentation click here</p>
<p>Discussion Points</p>	<p>ENRD Year 5: What else could we do to support LEADER? (Discussion in small groups)</p> <p>The main discussion points were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAG managers, MA and PA representatives welcome the ENRD's knowledge dissemination during this programming period. All should be invited to training and information sessions organised at national level in order to share experience. • There is a strong need for good promotional materials focusing on the added value of LEADER. These could include a documentary film which is equally relevant for PAs, MAs, LAGs and for citizens in Europe. All actors should be invited to speak up in the video. A documentary film to explain what TNC is would be useful for those who still have a difficulty to understand how big and powerful such cooperation can be. Projects, though very important, are not the only -or even main- element of LEADER. Any new video should spread the core message

of LEADER and its added value.

- LEADER practitioners would welcome more events (at least one per year) for LAGs which have a [more] practical orientation. Such events would also provide the opportunity to disseminate FGs' results by communicating practical and applicable findings through workshops.
- It was proposed that the ENRD should organise activities together with FARNET and the idea of a joint conference for LAGs/FLAGs was highlighted in order to work together collectively; identifying common problems and to sharing experience.
- Many tools exist already to support LEADER, but people have to be able to use them, therefore translation of the tools is welcome.
- Guidelines and training for LAGs are needed as soon as possible in order to support the elaboration of LDS in a multi-fund context. Building capacity of LEADER actors is important. Training should be organised within the present programmes.
- FG4 had a great dynamic and effectively brought together a range of actors. This approach should continue and play an active role in practical preparations for the new programme.
- There should be mechanisms for groups to share expertise and knowledge, not just projects. The idea is to have a pool of people to share knowledge proactively to maximize benefits.
- It was suggested that an ENRD database should be developed including contact details of those responsible for TNC and also a list of those dealing with various funds under the CSF in order to help disseminate the LEADER method in other funds.
- To maximize the knowledge sharing among people 'on-the-ground' it would be beneficial to have working groups in multiple languages to enable stakeholders and technical experts to contribute in languages other than English. Integrating more languages is an objective of the ENRD. This will include looking at partnerships with NRNs in relation to languages and sharing translation resources so that the ENRD can act as repository of this information. Such ideas should be explored with individual networks to respond to specific needs.