

STREAM 3 Plenary Discussion Summary

How can we DELIVER the LEADER approach more simply and efficiently?

Summarized by

ENRD CP

I. Topics initiated Day 1 of the event and hosted by participants during Day 2:

1. National Leader Networks - What, how & why? Host: *Petri Rinne, ELARD - European LEADER Association for Rural Development*
2. How can we simplify administration? Host: *(Sarah Watson, LAG member) , (Guoda Burokiene, Marijampoles local action group, Lithuania)*
3. How can we transfer best practice from LEADER into a simple & efficient multifund/CLLD programme? Host: *Roland Hamel, Agence de Service et de Paiement, France*
4. How can we create different procedures for large and small projects? Host: *Mackintosh Katy, Scottish Government, United Kingdom*
5. What methods can we use to clearly explain LEADER to everyone involved in the Programme? Host: *(Lorna Elliot, Argyll and the Islands LEADER LAG, United Kingdom), (Julia Manaquin, French Rural Network NSU, France)*
6. How do we create, maintain and develop communication & coordination between LAGs, PAs and MAs? Host: *Roland Hamel, Agence de Service et de Paiement, France*
7. How can we identify and develop innovative financial tools for Leader & secure match-funding? Host: *(Ryan Howard, South & East Cork Area Development (SECAD) Ltd, Ireland), (Gelencser Géza Dénes, KOPPÁNY-VALLEY LAG, Hungary)*
8. How can we simplify TNC approaches and increase its emphasis on LAGs? Host: *(John Toland, Cavan-Monaghan LEADER Agricultural College Ballyhaise, Ireland), (György Mudri, European Commission, DG AGRI)*

II. Scope of the document and topics of open discussions hosted by participants during Day 2:

Stream 3 open discussions were organised on the topic of '*delivering* the LEADER approach more simply and efficiently'. Participants were asked to set the agenda for discussion and propose topics for open discussion. They proposed a wide range of questions for discussion as presented in the table at the end of this document. Questions suggested by conference participants were grouped under main 'overarching' questions, and open discussions were carried out in 8 groups addressing the following issues/questions:

1. *National Leader Networks – what, how and why?*
2. *How can we simplify administration?*
3. *How can we transfer best practice from Leader into a simple & efficient multi-fund/CLLD programme?*
4. *How can we create different procedures for large and small projects?*
5. *What methods can we use to clearly explain Leader to everyone involved in the Programme?*
6. *How do we create, maintain and develop communication & coordination between LAGs, PAs and MAs?*
7. *How can we identify and develop innovative financial tools for Leader & secure match-funding?*
8. *How can we simplify TNC approaches and increase its emphasis on LAGs?*

The stream discussions covered a wide range of topics and issues in depth. This document aims to summarise and synthesise the main findings of the variety of discussions and draw some overall findings on the overarching question on: '*How can we deliver the LEADER approach more simply and efficiently?*'. Due to its nature, this paper cannot reflect the richness of the individual discussions; separate working documents are prepared on each of these (please request these if you are interested in the details of discussion of one or the other topic).

III. Main points from the Stream 3 plenary discussion following the open group discussions:



Drawings made during the event from a team of artists capturing the discussion

Group discussions started by identifying main issues and concerns that participants can bring to the table. After this 'scene-setting' exchange, participants were asked to list possible solutions to the various issues and problems. The wide range of issues (and possible solutions) that came out of the open discussions were presented and then clustered put on the main board.

Participants identified existing and "new" solutions under each topic. The result from the discussion highlighted the added value of networking and exchange of experience.

The common outcomes of the discussion groups across the 'efficient delivery' theme were the following:

1. Bridge between LAGs, MAs and PAs – mechanisms for communication and exchange



The importance of ‘*better communication and exchange*’ between LAGs, MAs and PAs was emphasised during many of the discussion groups. It has been stressed that more efforts need to be given to understand each other’s’ point of view. It was also suggested that exchange could be facilitated by regular meetings and seminars involving all stakeholders (such as the ones organised by ENRD) and focus groups. MAs and PAs should be made better aware of the work of LAGs (e.g. through study visits; or presentation/training by LAGs for MA/PA staff; explaining history of LEADER). Furthermore, stakeholders (including LAGs) need to be jointly and actively involved in planning and programming.

Some of the examples for developing mechanisms include: *Focus Groups involving all stakeholders, Meetings, seminars for MAs, PAs, LAGs, Joint action: national guidelines for LEADER developed together; LAG managers negotiate with MA, Open discussions between MAs, PAs, LAGs, Regular meetings of MA, PA, LAG, EU– exchange of experiences, joint trainings*

2. Enhancement of LEADER identity, visibility and recognition



Another set of outcomes focused on the issue of *better representation of LAGs and their interests*, and the *need for strong networks (representing LAG interests)* was emphasised. It was stressed that LAGs’ interests should be represented by strong networks (or association/“union” of LAGs) at both national and European levels; and/or a good cooperation should be built between the national rural networks and more ‘bottom-up’ LEADER networks. Overall, LAGs should have a stronger influence on the way the rural development programmes are developed. Also LEADER approach implementation is seen to be connected to a shared recognition of the added value of the approach which requires dissemination of information and building an identity on local and national level.

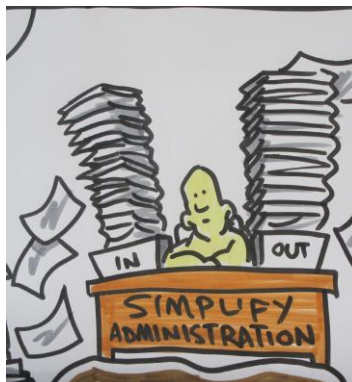
3. Guidance & information

During Stream 3 discussions the importance of useful guidance and information provision was also stressed:

- On the one hand, it was argued that **guidance should come from the EU-level**. EU-level forums can typically address issues relevant to all/several Member States. Suggested forms of guidance included Q&A on EU website; EU hot-line & electronic sharing of best practice tools (e.g. through ENRD);
- On the other hand, the **guidance should be also provided at regional-level**, e.g. in the form of regional offices & information points on funding at the regional/territorial level.
- Apart from developing guidance it is also important how they are disseminated; Some ideas include:
 - **External facilitators**
 - More **regional offices** NRN or NSU
 - **Coordinating info points** on funding (regional/territorial)
 - **Electronic sharing** of best practice tools (ENRD?)/ IT-system–shared (FI&PT)
 - **EU website** for Q&A / MA&PA publishing Q&A on their web-pages
 - **EU Hot-line**
 - **Organise “open days”** topic-based discussions
 - **NSU organises four times a year information days** for LAGs; PA&MA are involved (EE)
 - **Focus group on EU-level** on payment management issues
 - **More consistent technical assistance**, continual development & training
 - **Capacity-building** for all layers
 - **Tailored communication** and **good translation** into local language

4. Rules, procedures & financing (including transnational cooperation)

During discussions about the procedures the following key points were highlighted:










Harmonisation: It was suggested that common procedures, including single application forms (for LEADER) are developed; and regulations include project approval time-frames.

Simplification: There is a general need for simplified regulations and procedures, including the ‘rationalisation of paperwork’. These should be accompanied with a clear map of responsibilities and clear guidance.

- **Flexibility** is required to accommodate the needs of LEADER: It was argued that (control) regulations need to take into account the nature of LEADER, and therefore should not be too restrictive (in other words include an acceptable level of failure, i.e. take into account the inherent risks in projects). A related suggestion is the on-going system for approval to MAs.
- **Specific procedures for small projects:** The specific nature of small (LEADER-type) projects was also emphasised, highlighting the importance of **simplified procedures** (simple application, no heavy procedures, different rules) with regard to these (a good example being the 'umbrella projects', when smaller projects operate under the 'umbrella' of a larger entity/project that takes responsibility for the majority of administrative work).
- Similarly, the suggestions received with regard to the possible ways of financing LEADER-type projects, recognise the need for **flexibility and risk-management**, especially with regard to small-scale projects.
- One set of suggestions proposed **alternative, innovative or more flexible ways of financing** LEADER-type small projects (at the same time highlighting the need for a definition on what is 'small'). Suggestions by participants included the acceptance of 'contributions in kind' and incentives for private co-financing (including 'logical co-financing rates'). Others acknowledged the need for opening up more flexible ways of financing LEADER-type small projects (e.g. soft loans, soft regulation, venture capital, revolving funds, employment & working capital, pre-payment for projects)
- **New social practices** were also identified with regard to the financing of small LEADER projects, such as time banking, community investment fund and 'crowd funding/ crowd equity'.
- **Umbrella projects** were highlighted as good practice examples. For instance, in Sweden small & simple projects (approx. 5000 euro) are financed under an 'umbrella' that is owned by the LAG and includes a large number of activities underneath: different NGOs, groups of young people who perform good things.
- Finally, a set of findings focused on transnational cooperation and related rules, emphasising the resource-intensive nature of the **preparatory work and prior planning** (which calls for allocation of additional budget already at the preparatory stage). At the same time TNC projects need to receive special attention and support (by MAs and NRNs; support should include national and international TNC events).

IV. Summaries of open discussions within Stream 3

Available summaries provided with the assistance of open discussion groups' hosts

#	Topic	Host	Summary
1	National Leader Networks - What, how & why?	Petri Rinne	
2	a. How can we simplify administration: Survey summary and possible solutions	Sarah Watson, Guoda Burokiene	
	b. How can we simplify administration?	Sarah Watson, Guoda Burokiene	
3	How can we transfer best practice from Leader into a simple & efficient multifund/CLLD programme?	Roland Hamel	
5	What methods can we use to clearly explain Leader to everyone involved in the Programme?	Lorna Elliot, Julia Manaquin	
6	How do we create, maintain and develop communication & coordination between LAGs, PAs and MAs?	Roland Hamel	
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