



Open Days 2012: 10th European Week of Regions and Cities

Community-Led Local Development at OPEN DAYS 2012

For a week in October, Open Days 2012 in Brussels was the place to be! For the 10th edition of OPEN DAYS, the Committee of the Regions brought together projects and experts from all over Europe to discuss different issues, such as Community-Led Local Development (CLLD). Twenty CLLD workshops were held during 8-11 October 2012. Project representatives, experts, associations, as well as EU, national, regional and local level officials participated in an open exchange about the European Commission proposals regarding funding of CLLD in urban, rural and fisheries areas post-2013.





FOUR DG AGRI workshops on CLLD



Four of the CLLD workshops were organised by DG AGRI in partnership with the Contact Point of the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD). The aim was to generate discussion about the preparation, design, implementation and management of Local Development Strategies (LDS), to create an understanding of how networking can be used as a tool to mobilise actors, and to publicise widely the added value of transnational cooperation between local territories.

Approximately 300 participants attended the four workshops representing various rural and regional development organisations, networks and public administrations from all over Europe. Each discussion was followed by a networking session where workshop organisers and participants could continue the discussions in a more informal way.



**SHARING EXPERIENCES -
The four workshops held were:**

Transnational cooperation (TNC): A key tool for CLLD

This workshop focused on the experience of LEADER practitioners regarding the contribution of transnational cooperation for Local Action Groups (LAG) seeking innovative Local Development Strategies. Awareness was raised about the following aspects:



- It takes time for a LAG to **build the capacities** necessary to initiate TNC projects.
- Successful projects with **tangible results usually include**: regular meetings throughout the process, shared roles and responsibilities, taking everyone's opinion on-board, the use of good methodologies for discussion, the maintaining of focus and trust for all partners in the process.
- Nevertheless, it's necessary to accept that there is also a **risk of failure**: the project might not work, because of aspects such as language barriers or differences in culture or attitude.
- **TNC with third-countries** will still be possible during the 2014-2020 programming period.
- Reducing the administrative burden to **adopt lighter procedures** (like it is the case under INTERREG Programme) would encourage more LAGs to develop TNC projects.
- **Technical assistance and support** for LAGs willing to initiate a TNC project are necessary.
- From a **budgetary point of view**, recovering the costs from other partners is not always easy for the coordinating LAG. Furthermore, costs incurred by the coordination process should also be budgeted.
- **Multi-funding** during the 2014-2020 programming period, as foreseen under Common Strategic Framework (CSF), brings significant opportunities and important challenges.

Workshop snapshots

"The transnational cooperation project LINC proved to be for a source of new rural development ideas. The programme will continue to develop and in the future, it will give more priority to growth and job creation."

Kristiina Liimand, Executive Director, Tartu Rural Development Association (LAG), Estonia



"So far, the main topics treated in TNC initiated by French LAGs were related to tourism, the environment, agricultural products and youth. In the future, it will address topics such as capacity building, improvement of farm technics and innovation."

"TNC projects are the right environment in which to develop new products with people who cease to be competitors and instead become 'co-operators'."

Dorothee Duguet, Resource person for cooperation, Support Unit of the French National Rural Network, France

"TNC is a good instrument to attract young people through environmental issues"

Juha-Matti Markkola, Network Coordinator, National Rural Network, Finland



"Cooperation is not only a counterpart for LEADER. It's a real and strategic way to obtain results for the Rural Development Programme of each territory."

José Ángel Garcia Lucas, Cooperation Manager, LAG Adri Jiloca Gallocanta, Spain



Networking as a tool for successful CLLD

The workshop helped to develop a better understanding of how networking can be used as a tool to mobilise actors and create, share, build ideas and experiences that can evolve into a sustainable CLLD. Participants discussed the following points:



- LEADER has **local but also trans-local dimensions**, it aims to connect people, areas and activities.
- **Networking is about people/human capital** and not systems and institutions.
- So far, networking and cooperation have been seen as a **source of inspiration and know-how** which make improvements to LAGs' domestic efforts. Study visits and thematic workshops were considered a useful input to the LAGs' own work.
- **Mobility of LAG members and staff** (twinning, exchange of staff, study tours...) should be supported more.
- The lack of staff and resources at LAG level obstructs networking.
- **National Rural Networks (NRN) are seen as more flexible** than Managing Authorities and are therefore more easily perceived as partners by stakeholders.
- Communication management and **open systems of information and communication** are needed.
- Sound-effective **networking between NRNs and the ENRD** is important to keep regional and local actors well informed.
- Future challenges lie in **the recognition by Managing Authorities of the strategic value of CLLD** and whether a clear mandate will be given to it. In this respect, present timing should be taken into consideration as RDPs are currently already being drafted.

Workshop snapshots

"The added-value of networking is in sharing problems and this implies focusing on the actors and their objectives."

Donald Aquilina, Group Leader, Networking and LEADER Group, ENRD Contact Point



"Networking is an important aspect of the LEADER method since the beginning and with the increase of LAGs, it became necessary under LEADER II to create National Rural Networks."

Jean-Michel Courades, Policy Officer, European Commission DG AGRI G3

"The structure of the Italian NRN changed a lot since the beginning. Step-by-step the centre became larger and the network is now much more characterised by a bottom-up approach. The level of knowledge of stakeholders influences their capacity to act."

Raffaella di Napoli, LEADER/TNC Coordinator, Italian National Rural Network, Italy



Ingredients for a successful Local Development Strategy

This workshop presented the results and recommendations of the Focus Group on Better Local Development Strategies – established in 2011 within the ENRD - with regards to the current and the next programming period and good examples of LDS preparation and implementation from various EU Member States. Amongst the insights shared:



Local Development Strategy (LDS) design

- **The multi-fund approach is an opportunity to develop better integrated strategies** in the future by supporting a wider umbrella strategy and not specific strategies for each fund which do not reflect the global needs of an area.
- Multi-fund strategies should not be seen as **multi-problem strategies**. They should be simple and clear and since they operate in a complex environment, they should be flexible and adaptable to change.
- **A good LDS means a good process** involving ongoing dialogue between LEADER practitioners (LAGs, Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies) in order to avoid potential pitfalls.
- A good strategy needs to have a simple, clear and logical structure; it has to be feasible, realistic and adaptable and it needs to include new development ideas or solutions.
- **Communication and cooperation is crucial:** enhance good partnership with institutions and involve all the relevant local actors in designing the LDS.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Communicating the results of LDS implementation is important **to show the added value of LEADER**.
- There are several methods to monitor and evaluate LDS delivery against primary objectives, however it is **difficult to find adequate criteria**, since there are many dimensions to measure. Assessment should look beyond the projects themselves to include the effectiveness of processes (e.g. animation) and ties inside and outside of LAGs.

Preparation of the next period

- Regarding the **transition** to the next programming period, Member States can use the Technical Assistance of their current RDPs to undertake preparatory work.
- Managing Authorities need to be convinced **to start the LDS preparatory process before the legal framework for LEADER is established**.
- There is an antinomy between increased professionalism of LAGs and the need to increase participation of local people without specific technical skills.
- **Local communities are the backbones of economic development.** The economic crisis is an opportunity to change by reacting collectively via a community-based approach.

Workshop snapshots

"It is important to increase participation of local people in the strategy development so that they can contribute ideas about how to develop the territory"

Sabine Weizenegger, Managing director, Regional Manager, LAG Regionalentwicklung Oberallgäu, Germany



"A good LDS is fundamental for preserving the added value of LEADER. An LDS is a process for change, therefore it is vital to get it right."

John Grieve, Expert in local development, ENRD Contact Point

"A LDS should be the result of a process that gives answers to local needs in the context of a fast-evolving environment. The multi-fund approach is an opportunity to integrate objectives, priorities and targets of a LDS."

Anastasios M. Perimenis, General Manager, Lesvos Local Development Company S.A., Greece



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Management of CLLD: Division of tasks between authorities and Local Action Groups

This workshop focused on the different delivery models for Community-Led Local Development that were being used under the current 2007-2013 period for LEADER and the possible implications for multi-funded local development strategies in the future:

- The possibility of **multi-fund LDSs** supported by four EU funds makes it possible to **support LAGs with an enlarged scope**, however the steps for harmonising the rules for these EU Funds are not complete yet.
- The LEADER approach has and is being delivered through wide range of delivery models. **A clear division of tasks between the different actors** involved in the delivery is crucial for the success of the Local Development Strategies.
- The European Commission's intension is to strengthen the role of **LDS as central tool** to meet EU rural development objectives at local level and to unlock strategies from rural development measures.
- Since strategies are about people, it is important to **strengthen the participation of the private sector** in the partnerships but also to reinforce networking tools for LAGs on EU and national levels.
- The **planning process** for the 2014-2020 period needs to be started **as soon as possible** and allow LAGs to prepare their draft strategies for the future.
- A greater focus needs to be given to **animation and capacity building**. They are considered to be vital parts of LEADER implementation. Capacity building delivers and represents much of the added value of LEADER; it creates the ability to effect change. Knowledge sharing, mentoring and networks have a vital role in increasing capacity and improving effectiveness of the LEADER delivery.



Workshop snapshots

"We have a tradition of open exchange between authorities. It is important to have a dialogue between LEADER actors"

Sanna Sihvola, Senior Officer, LEADER coordinator
for the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finland

"The whole system needs to work together. We need to explore ways to improve the implementation process -specially the division of tasks- through capacity building on all levels, especially in view of a possible multi-fund context"

John Grieve, Expert in local development,
ENRD Contact Point



"The preparation for the next period has already started in Poland, LAGs have to prepare their draft LDS in order to collect ideas for the future"

Joanna Gierulska, LEADER Unit,
Rural Development Department, Ministry of
Agriculture and Rural Development, Poland



For more information on the workshop materials please visit the ENRD website

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en-rd-events-and-meetings/seminars-and-conferences/community-led-local-development-open-days-2012/en/community-led-local-development-open-days-2012_en.cfm



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