



ENRD webinar

2nd meeting of the ENRD Thematic Group Making the seven LEADER principles work in practice for all LAGs under the CAP Strategic Plans

Highlights report

This meeting discussed the four LEADER principles including key factors affecting their full application in practice. Relevant MS experience was shared, and final TG outputs were agreed.

Introduction to the meeting



Peter Toth (ENRD CP) updated the TG on its work to date [introducing](#) the meeting agenda.



Iwona Lisztwan (DG AGRI) reflected on the LEADER principles, reminding participants why the TG had focused on them and emphasising their importance in the current policy context. LEADER's method produces added value through improved governance, social capital and better results compared to non-LEADER projects. The Commission will monitor and evaluate the added value of LEADER in the CAP Strategic Plans. The source of added value is a good application of all the seven principles of LEADER method by the LAGs. Therefore, it is important have a good understanding and real application of the LEADER method by all LAGs.

Event Information

Date: 24 May 2022

Location: Virtual meeting

Organisers: ENRD Contact Point

Participants: 41 participants from 22 EU Member States (MS), including MAs, NRNs, PAs, Local Action Groups (LAGs), national LEADER networks/associations and the European Commission.

Outcomes: Key elements defining four LEADER principles: Local Action Groups (LAGs); Local Development Strategies (LDS); cooperation and networking along with relevant blocking factors and participants' proposed solutions. Discussion of the Thematic Group's final outputs.

Web page: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/2nd-meeting-enrd-thematic-group-making-seven-leader-principles-work-practice-all_en-work-practice-all_en

Full implementation of the LEADER principles



Participant groups discussed [which of the seven LEADER principles/features is most 'difficult'](#) to implement and identified the following principles and key considerations. For **cooperation**: differences in cultures, rules, and procedures. Cooperation could benefit from harmonisation of relevant rules. For **innovation**: difficulty in defining appropriate local innovation criteria, avoiding risk (sticking to 'comfort zones'), balancing top-down restrictions with pressure to innovate, uncertainty in designing innovation in the LDS. For **local development strategies**: balancing diverse local stakeholder involvement in managing LDS decision-making, design and implementation. LAGs need freedom to define LDS local priorities. Functional **partnerships and the bottom-up approach** require trust throughout the delivery chain and with partners from other regions or countries. Partnerships and formal and informal structures should be clear and accessible for local stakeholders.



Public-private partnerships and strategies

Panel discussion



Experienced LEADER practitioners discussed involving and empowering relevant, diverse stakeholder groups and sectors strategically in the partnership and LDS. **Gabriel O'Connell (Monaghan Integrated Development, Ireland)**, stressed how local partnerships are perceived by local stakeholders is key to their involvement, e.g. for local youth and disadvantaged groups. Partnership, representing all relevant local stakeholder groups should drive their involvement through a transparent inclusive process balancing top-down and bottom-up considerations. For **François Galabrun (LEADER France)**, "LEADER is simple", as long as local partnerships properly represent and involve local stakeholders, facilitate and monitor their participation and that of relevant social and economic sectors in LDS design and implementation. Success means prioritising people over institutions, clear definition of the LAG mission, and a LAG manager 'translating' relevant rules and procedures to local stakeholders. For **Anastasios Perimenis (Lesvos Local Development Company, Greece)**, the role of LAGs is to make LEADER implementation simple for the locals. There is a clear distinction between the formal (procedural) structures of the LAG and the public-private partnership's informal networking (bringing innovation, new ideas, energy, LEADER 'spirit'). Balancing and building local trust in LAG structures takes time and effort. The LAG manager's role is to stimulate and maintain interaction between local stakeholders and their feeling of LAG 'ownership'.

Working group discussion



Participants emphasised the importance of balanced representation of local stakeholders in the LAG to [public-private partnerships](#). 'Rotation' within the LAG's formal structures (i.e. LAG Board membership having a limited duration) aids its inclusiveness and openness. Local specificities need to be considered. The quality of the partnership needs to be defined, monitored, maintained, and improved, all with the involvement of local stakeholders. Partnerships – as well as strategies – have to be area- and needs-driven. Simplifying and 'demystifying' [local development strategies](#) to make them locally accessible is a priority. LDSs need to be locally coherent, adaptable to change, proportionate and work on a scale that is accessible to local stakeholders. LAGs must communicate the LDS clearly. LEADER can't address all local needs, LDS must be strategic and focus on outcomes, complement relevant strategies, and employ other funds to achieve objectives and use the right achievement indicators. A clear multi-level governance framework and a simple delivery system for the LDS is essential. Evidenced stakeholder engagement and LDS ownership is important.

Networking and cooperation

Panel discussion



According to **Shane Conway (National Rural Network, Ireland)**, networking builds social capital and trust among LAGs in different areas, regions, or MS, leading to cooperation activities. NRNs and ENRD play a crucial supporting role in networking and cooperation, e.g., with peer-to-peer exchanges of local knowledge. More networking is needed between practitioners and researchers (e.g., EIP-AGRI multi-actor approach). LEADER and its rural elements can link to AKIS under the CAP Strategic Plans. **Sara Josefa Herrero (NRN, Spain)** described the Spanish NRN's support for regionalised networking and cooperation, with 18 RDPs, and different cooperation rules and project call timelines. The NRN helped reduce and simplify the administrative burden to allow the LAGs to focus on networking and cooperation, promoting a national standard agreement to simplify cooperation and improve communication between LAGs, NRN, and Managing Authorities. The Spanish NRN support is based on a LAG's needs assessment related to specific topics and themes. For **Neli Kadieva (National LEADER Network, Bulgaria)**, 2014-2020 challenges for Bulgarian LAGs included limited funding for cooperation, different for application call schedules, and language and capacity limitations. LAGs networking has improved. Future improvements may include: integrating the cooperation budget to the LDSs and collecting information on the impact of Bulgarian LAG cooperation projects. LAGs' role in implementing Smart Villages may be key in the new CSP period.



Working group discussion



Participants agreed that [networking](#), animation and cooperation are a means to enable LDS implementation. Networking can enhance LAG capacity and be greatly supported by NRNs. The contribution of networking and cooperation to implementing the LDS is very important. The LDS should be LAG-owned and operated; the role of the LAG Board is key. Networking and [cooperation](#) can both occur inside a LAG territory or transnationally, introducing new actors and innovation. Cooperation's added value is not clearly demonstrated to MAs, in some MS cooperation projects are still regarded as a form of 'tourism'. Cross-border cooperation is important, as is considering previous ENRD work.

Thematic Group reflections

Panel discussion



For **Iva Přichystalová (Paying Agency, Czechia)** the TG provides an opportunity to explore different perspectives and see 'the bigger picture' - LEADER works in different European territories, yet with common principles. The TG highlighted the benefits of peer to peer working. **Luis Chaves (Minha Terra, Portugal)** stressed the TG's importance, this topic is the focus of other organisations and the upcoming European Court of Auditors report. He highlighted the TG's peer-to-peer working benefits, including earlier ENRD LEADER practitioner-led work (PWG), several such conclusions are still applicable and helpful to improve current LEADER implementation. **Juha-Matti Markkola (NRN, Finland)** underlined the validity of previous PWG recommendations, and emphasised the importance of ENRD TGs and other opportunities for peer-to-peer learning (including DG AGRI's presence). Revisiting the LEADER principles regularly is useful; launching a TG earlier could have led to better preparation of national CAP Strategic Plans. The NRN appreciated the opportunity to review the working draft summaries of LEADER principles. Following LEADER principles would avoid it being just another source of funding.

Bringing it all together – drawing conclusions, summary, next steps



Peter Toth (ENRD CP) described [the process of developing the final outputs of the Thematic Group](#) based on a final review of the seven LEADER principles working draft summaries. All outputs will be published on the [ENRD website](#). **David Lamb (ENRD CP)** closed the meeting thanking all the participants for their inputs and activity. The seven LEADER principles need to be considered as working together and strengthening this understanding also when disseminating the TG outputs. LEADER work does not finish with the completion of this TG: LEADER has a role to play in several work strands, including the Rural Pact, Smart Villages, and others. Cooperation with other EU CAP Network support units is essential.