

Cooperation in the LEADER delivery chain

LEADER case study Strong underlying values and connections to academic institutions in support of LEADER/CLLD

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There is a strong conviction at the LEADER Network of Croatia (LNC) that the LEADER/CLLD approach is of significant relevance at all levels of rural development (from national to local governance, from planning through to implementation, and across all stakeholders and sectors).

To raise awareness, build capacities and understanding, the LNC promotes the seven principles of LEADER intensively through numerous educational actions, know-how transfers, technical assistance, and 'by example' on a daily basis. Its ambition is to maximise the ability of all stakeholders to develop excellence in communication, cooperation and partnership for the common good of integrated rural development across Croatia. Intensive work on staff capacity building is thereby required at all levels and at all time.

The LNC understands its role not merely as supporting Local Action Groups (LAGs), but as pro-actively implementing the LEADER/CLLD approach through its own actions. For example, all of its 59 network members (48 LAGs and Fisheries LAGs - FLAGs - and 11 academic and professional organisations) are recognised as integral partners who are jointly responsible and actively engaged in delivering LEADER/CLLD in Croatia. Taking initiative and being proactive in addressing existing needs wherever they arise is a core message promoted by LNC.

The **main principles of LNC work across all members** are:

- Lifelong learning.
- Partnership and cooperation.
- Commitment to action.
- Sustainable economic development of local communities and strengthening of rural-urban and rural-coastal links.
- Teamwork, cooperation and dialogue of all development stakeholders of the local community.
- Gender equality and equal opportunities.

LNC core values underlying all of their activities are:

- Dedication to the well-being of the local community.
- Respect for human rights, tolerance and respect for diversity.
- Understanding of the importance of publication and dissemination.



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- Responsibility: community benefit supersedes individual benefit.
- Cooperative attitude to work effectively across all stakeholders.
- Understanding of information and knowledge as a common good.
- Democracy and transparency.
- Justice and fairness.

The strong emphasis on building capacity in the above topics is instrumental in helping overcome challenges, such as scepticism and negative pre-conceptions (usually based on a lack of experience and knowledge of LEADER).

A further unique angle of LNC is its cooperation with the academic sector.

Since its establishment in 2012, the LNC has pursued close linkages with academic institutions at home and abroad. The aim is to provide useful scientific backing of the LEADER/CLLD approach in line with the principles of the quadruple helix concept of cross-sector, multi-disciplinary development.

One of the key successes of LNC's activities is the organisation of an international cross-sector conference in Croatia on the practical and theoretical implications of the LEADER/CLLD approach (see link below). Organised on a backdrop of scepticism about its feasibility, LNC organised the conference within six month bringing together academic, ministerial, and local practitioners from across South Eastern Europe in 2019. This was the first conference of its kind and demonstrated successfully that cross-sector cooperation has positive effects across the entire LEADER delivery chain. Over 320 participants from 20 countries participated.

The conference delivered a number of important outcomes, including:

- Scientific validation of the LEADER/CLLD approach as a highly respected integrated approach in rural development in theory and practice.
- Recognition of the value created by local action groups as effective local development agents in bringing about positive change and progress.
- Direct input from local practitioners informing applied academic research and rural development theory.
- Inspiration by the participative principles of LEADER and realisation that its multi-dimensional and inclusive approach is a powerful and effective mechanism applicable at all levels.

It is hoped that a follow-up conference will be organised in 2022.

Further information

LNC international conference: <https://www.see-leader.eu/programme/conference-programme>

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