

NETWORKING WITH LEADER

Strand highlights

The Networking with LEADER strand consisted of two rounds of practitioner hosted 'Action Labs'. The objectives were to work together to identify what is essential, what works best, what can be achieved, what can be improved in adding value through LEADER networking. Day 1 presented and discussed six LEADER networking stories, concrete examples at project, LAG and Member State (MS)/EU Network levels. Participants were given the opportunity to visit three of the six examples and encouraged to visit three types, a project, LAG and Network.

Day 2 considered how networking can best contribute to take LEADER forward post 2020 with stronger and wider stakeholder engagement. Three forward orientated approaches were presented to the whole group: LAG outreach through Crowdfunding; a regional inter-LAG approach and how a National Rural Network (NRN) can support LAGs. Participants then discussed the topic further in three groups, finally drawing together three sets of conclusions.

About the strand

Title: Networking with LEADER

Dates: 11-12 April 2019

Participants: Circa 200 participants took part including representatives of project holders, local action groups, research institutes, Managing Authorities, European organisations and the European Commission.

Speakers: Tasos Perimenis & Nikoloas Ploukos (Lesvos LAG); Paloma Fabregas Martinez & Jose' Mariano Altemir Lascorz (Pueblos Vivos); Kersting Hellenborg, Tvonne Kievad & Sara Person (Rural Reporters); Felix Fössleitner & Isolde Fuerst (LAG Kalkalpen and Linzland); Kristiina Tammets & Hartmut Berndt (ELARD - EU LEADER Association for Rural Development); Zuzana Dvorokova & Jan Drazsky Florian (CZ - NRN); Stefan Hackl (Crowdfunding); Juliette Huis in't Veld & Giny Hoogeslag (Extended LEADER); Juha-Matti Markkola and Kari Kykilahati (FI - NRN)

Facilitators: John Grieve, Susan Grieve, Helle Breindahl, Simona Pascariu (ENRD CP), Hannes Wimmer (ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk)

LEADER NETWORKING LESSONS

The first session focused on rural networking as an integral part of what LEADER does and the pivotal role of LEADER networking in the development and evolution of wider rural networking. With the use of their networking diagrams, Action Lab hosts explained how networking had been used as a key part of their success; followed by group discussions on their approach. Action Labs were hosted by: two Rural Inspiration Award project finalists - Pueblos Vivos and Local reporters serving rural areas; three LAGs demonstrating networking's contribution to their wider work - Lesvos, Kalkalpen and Linzland and two networks, the Czech NRN and ELARD highlighting their work at National and EU levels.

Main outcomes

Through three rounds of discussion, the participants and the hosts explored the added value networking has contributed to LEADER achievement, what would have been lost without it and how we can ensure that LEADER networking continues to contribute. The following main points emerged: It is people not institutions that enable things to happen, networking is therefore most important for LAGs and stakeholders. Local networks can be the eyes and ears of rural people and when they share their experiences they can promote the good work that is taking place. One of the



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biggest achievements has been the inclusion of young people in the networks, they bring fresh ideas and question standard ways of doing things. Networking has delivered creativity, innovation, self-confidence for local rural people and has motivated them to participate in developing their communities.

FUTURE LEADER NETWORKING

The second round of Action Labs built on the previous discussions with participants again working together to reflect on what has been achieved and how best to strengthen and embrace new thinking and approaches. Discussions focused on exploring how networking can best contribute to taking LEADER forward post 2020 under CAP plans with stronger stakeholder engagement in future. Action Lab hosts gave three inspiring inputs on lessons learned via LAG outreach work, specifically through crowdfunding as a means of extending participation; broadening LEADER involvement by joining with other LAGs and a future vision of how NRN and LAGs can work together to build on current successes.



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Main outcomes

In each 'Lab' sub groups of participants considered what the three most interesting networking actions, which were most likely to strengthen LEADER relevance and achievement, might be. Drawing together each of the Labs' sub groups' findings, the main points that emerged were: that LAGs need to promote LEADER and themselves explaining to communities what it means at the local level and that when multiple LAGs work together they should follow common goals and common rules. When using crowdfunding as an outreach tool

through LEADER it is very important to build up 'offline' activity in advance of 'on-line' activity; using personal contacts and creating strong individual buy-in is essential. For the future, the vision was that rural networks should be wider than LEADER and it should be possible to work together using all the ESI funds. Peer to peer training, both locally and at EU level should be encouraged and supported.

IN CONCLUSION

Day 1 Lessons - People not institutions make networks. Networking needs to take place within local communities to win their support and involvement; face to face meetings often work best. Networking to share information with all the stakeholders involved has been successful, and in return their voices are heard at decision making level with the value of their contributions recognised. Diversity of stakeholders encourages different ways of looking at things, provides new perspectives, pushing creativity - involving young people has been a great achievement. Mix things up - do things a bit differently to get creative solutions, be open to learning from failure. Use a variety of tools to improve communication and keep local stories and experiences at the heart. LEADER networking has allowed creativity, inspiration, and greater self-confidence to flourish in local communities, demonstrating its added value, key actions that should be built on for the future.

Day 2 Actions - Actions suggested to strengthen LEADER relevance and achievement included promoting LEADER through an international LAG day, demonstrating the level of LEADER involvement using a common LEADER# and a dedicated EU event for LAGs. Networks should build on and off-line communities to cascade information and emotion (ownership), valuing the role of their 'ambassadors'. Widen networking to include a multi-actor approach moving outside the 'bubbles' and increase peer to peer knowledge sharing at all levels. Improve LEADER branding - celebrate and inspire - a LEADER-FEST!

"There is not a single solution but a combination of on and off-line, direct and indirect contacts. Celebrate your success!" - Anke Wehmeyer (German NRN)

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https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/networx-inspiring-rural-europe_en