

Bottom-up territorial approaches such as LEADER and other forms of Community Led Local Development (CLLD) can play an important role in dealing with problems of poverty and social inclusion in rural areas. In particular, LEADER can help to identify specific problems at the local level, address these through tailor-made measures, and link together the various actors required to provide more effective solutions.

INTRODUCTION

LEADER takes a predominantly territorial approach, with strategies focusing on the development of deprived areas rather than the inclusion of deprived people. At the same time, LAGs often concentrated on working with the most active people in their areas to create jobs and improve the overall quality of life rather than trying to help the most marginalised groups. However, a number of LAGs also targeted excluded or disadvantaged groups through their strategies. The partnership principle of LEADER also aims to ensure a balanced representation of different groups in strategy development and implementation.

In the 2014-2020 policy framework, a new approach to local development has been introduced through CLLD, which opens up new, direct opportunities to deal with social inclusion. In particular, the European Social Fund will now be supporting CLLD in certain Member States.

LEADER focused on the development of deprived areas rather than the inclusion of deprived people.

To seize these opportunities a number of considerations need to be taken into account:

- ✓ The partnership principle of LEADER needs to be effectively implemented ensuring the involvement of excluded groups in strategy development and implementation.
- ✓ Project selection criteria and procedures need to be developed to ensure disadvantaged groups have fair access.
- ✓ There must be targeted investment in capacity building and animation.
- ✓ The LAG should use its own activities to create linkages with other support agencies and help build integrated support itineraries.
- ✓ LAG goals and targets need to be set in a way that reflect the real needs and capacities of vulnerable groups.

The social inclusion challenges of rural areas

Population change, poor education, weak labour markets, remoteness and low population density are the main causes of poverty and social exclusion in rural areas. The interaction of these determinants can produce a vicious circle in which poverty and social exclusion become entrenched. Much poverty in rural areas is 'invisible'.

Social indicators in EU rural areas

Poor education

Only 18.4% of the population had tertiary education qualifications in rural areas, compared to 33.2% in cities and 23.2% in towns and suburbs.

Weak labour markets

The unemployment rate in thinly-populated areas (EU-27) over the period 2008 to 2012 increased from 7% to almost 11%.

Demographic change

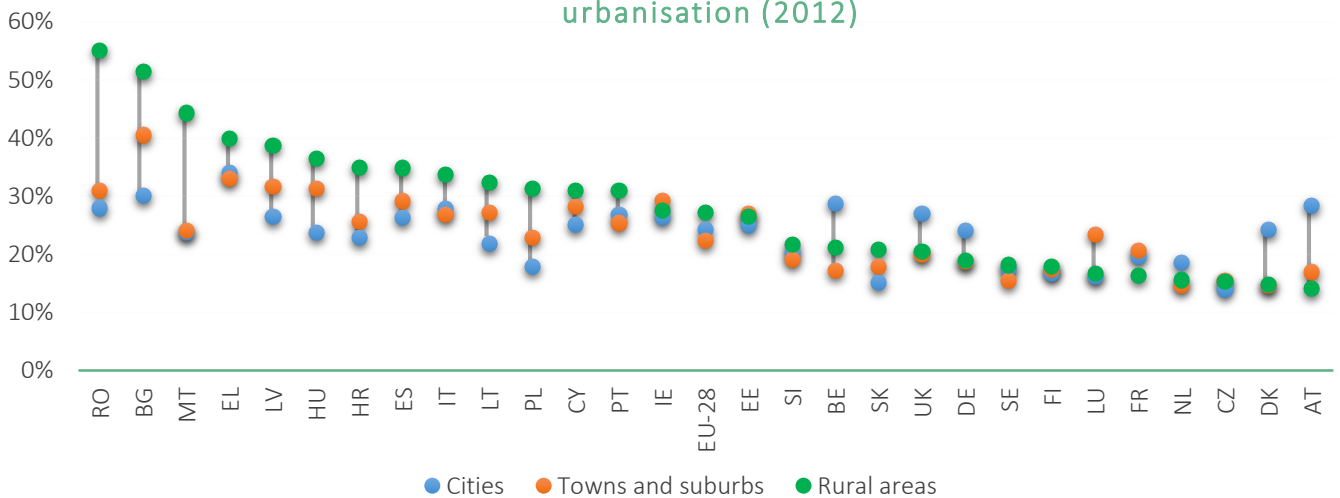
61 million people aged 15-64 years lived in predominantly rural areas, down from 68 million in 2008. People over 65 increased by 28% since 2005. The arrival of economic migrants and asylum seekers changed local demography.

Remoteness and low density

12.2% of the total population faced difficulty in accessing public transport in rural areas, as opposed to 5.7% in towns and suburbs and 2.3% in cities. Low population density makes services more expensive.



People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) by degree of urbanisation (2012)



Source: Eurostat <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/setupDownloads.do>

The contribution of LEADER to promoting social inclusion

Considerable experience has been accumulated through LEADER:

✓ *Social integration through labour market inclusion*

Many LEADER projects have examples of achieving inclusion through employment initiatives and/or prepared the ground for future labour market inclusion. These include the development of skills or the analysis of labour supply and demand (including the analysis of the needs of disadvantaged groups and how these can be matched with labour market demand).

Targeting disadvantaged people (Scotland)

Voluntary Action Okney implemented the 'CONNECT' LEADER project that focused on providing one-to-one, tailored personal and skills development. The aim of these activities was to ensure that young unemployed people gain the confidence, skills and commitment that enable them to move on to the more formal programmes offered

by partner agencies. CONNECT worked with referrals from several job centres, skills development and social service local organisations. As a consequence, young people gained skills and some of them managed to obtain employment after a work placement.

Clydeside Community Initiatives (CCI) is a social enterprise that received LEADER support to assist young people experiencing difficulties and adults with mental health problems. The project offered the opportunity to these target groups to develop vocational and social skills as well as self-confidence, self-esteem and independence by participating in commercial landscaping, woodwork and horticulture activities.

Benefits of LEADER

- ✓ Tailor made, personalised approach to skills development
- ✓ Advice on the financial possibilities for business creation
- ✓ Support based on knowledge of local labour market challenges (e.g. unemployment, barriers to entry) and opportunities (demand)
- ✓ Targeting different groups according to their characteristics



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✓ *Basic services in rural areas*

LEADER has supported initiatives that facilitate the access to services (health, education, leisure) especially for groups with limited mobility (old people, disabled). The set-up and support to social care facilities and services has been at the heart of LEADER as a means to promote the integration of disabled people. They include childcare and care farming or green care for disabled or elderly people.

Community development and social inclusion in Wallonia (Belgium)

The Walloon LAGs have coordinated a number of social initiatives targeting disadvantaged people. They include a transport service operated by volunteers to drive adults and children in areas without access to public transport or a transport service for elderly people with limited mobility.

LEADER value added:

Offering access to services and leisure for disadvantaged groups due to remoteness, age or lack of proximity services

Mobile home care services for elderly and disabled people (Portugal)

The provision of mobile support services to elderly and disabled people in rural areas in the Sousel region has been possible because of the involvement of local organisations that understand the limitations and the needs of these target groups. In one case, a new service was introduced to enable old or disabled people to travel or receive support at home. In an other case, an existing mobile service for the provision of home care was improved. In both cases, it was an initiative of local organisations (local community development group, local action group).

Key success factor:

Involvement of local organisations with a deep understanding of local problems

Social farming for social inclusion (Austria)

The Brueckler farm centre offers green care activities to people with various disabilities. The activities are designed to be flexible so they can adapt to the specific needs of individual clients. Green care on the farm helps people with disabilities gain confidence and acquire inter-personal skills.



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Social Service Net-Work in Tielt Region (Flanders)

The project responds to the lack of coordination of different service providers in rural areas with a view to provide effective social services to disadvantaged people living in these areas. The project improved coordination between the four social care companies, as well as between the companies and local authorities and citizens and provided assistance to people with special needs.

Key success factor:

Cooperation/networking of local governments, social services and social enterprises

Transitional care support in rural areas (Spain)

A social inclusion centre in Galicia supports disabled people to become more autonomous. The support provided includes adapted accommodation, educational facilities and outdoor recreational space.

A similar project entitled 'Social innovation circles' was implemented by the network of social organisations working with disabled people in two Spanish regions (Castilla y León and La Rioja). It addressed the issue of remoteness and accessibility through a package of services for disabled people.

Key success factors:

- ✓ Care services adapted to the individual needs of the disabled in a friendly environment
- ✓ Cooperation of public and private sector partners and social entities working with disabled people
- ✓ Testing different approaches to come up with tailor made responses

✓ *Integration of immigrants, refugees & ethnic minorities through social and cultural activities*

LEADER has supported the social integration through community building activities targeted at immigrants, refugees and ethnic minorities (mainly Roma). Local intermediaries/ integration coaches often play a key role in connecting with marginalised groups and their organisations. A common aim of these projects is to build the capacity of local stakeholder organisations and strengthen their participation in relevant projects and programmes.

Integration Pact (Luxemburg)

The 'Integration Pact' project created opportunities for residents from different origins, generations and socio-economic backgrounds to engage in a variety of social exchanges in Luxembourg's Moselle region. The project promoted active participation of all inhabitants in the community through cultural and artistic initiatives. The project's coordination service worked closely with schools, youth centres, cultural institutions and sports clubs to raise awareness of diversity and develop community activities.

The involvement of volunteers and close cooperation among various organisations was at the heart of the project

Circle in the multi-ethnic city of Lucera (Italy)

The 'Circle' in the city of Lucera (in the area Lucerino) is an open meeting place for Italian and foreign citizens to improve mutual understanding and multicultural exchange. Training courses were organised, which aimed at improving the knowledge of the Italian language, elements of basic computer and Italian culture, starting from education to law to the local way of life, customs and traditions of the area.

The integrated approach concerns both individuals and their territory



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Recommendations with regard to LEADER/CLLD & social inclusion

- ✓ Make '**social inclusion**' an **explicit objective** of Local Development Strategies, responding to the special conditions and needs of the local area.
- ✓ **Exchange of experience**, and possibly **inter-territorial and transnational cooperation** in the fields where LEADER can make a difference is important. LEADER can contribute to labour market inclusion (e.g. through training and skills development for youth), to the improvement of basic services (e.g. access to health services for people with limited mobility), integration of immigrants, refugees and ethnic minorities (especially through creating better socio-cultural links with local society).
- ✓ **Mobilise local people and communities** in both strategy development and implementation.
- ✓ **Local development coordinators** (integration coordinators, Roma coordinators, youth coaches) are effective means/methods for social integration. The youth coaches are a particularly successful practice that builds on the ability of young coaches to understand the problems of young people and connect more informally and effectively with them.
- ✓ The legal competences and funds of LAGs are limited and cannot hope to cover all the needs of marginalized groups. However, they can support **small scale actions** and play an important coordinating role between the different funds, departments and organisations required for integration. In this context **multifunded strategies** can play an important role.
- ✓ LAGs can **cooperate with relevant stakeholder organisations** with experience in the social integration of marginalised groups, including NGOs working with ethnic minorities. This means effective implementation of the LEADER partnership principle and creating a representative and balanced LAG membership.
- ✓ The people-centred approach needs to be further strengthened within LEADER. This means enabling initiatives that do not necessarily yield employment or income generation outcomes.
- ✓ LAGs need to consider developing **social inclusion specific indicators**. Social inclusion is not evident only in labour market participation. Indicators of multiple deprivation are a key data set used in many LAGs (e.g. in the UK). Further exchange and lessons from these can enhance the use of indicators in LAGs.