

# A LEADER JOURNEY THROUGH RURAL EUROPE

.....  
NATIONAL LAG NETWORKS REVEALING THE  
DIVERSITY OF LEADER IMPLEMENTATION



**“LEADER CREATES DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR THOSE WHO ARE USUALLY NOT WINNERS OF  
COMPETITIVE MACRO-ECONOMIC PROCESSES.”**

**“BESIDES LEADER, NO OTHER INSTRUMENT ALLOWS SUCH A  
LARGE SCALE OF CREATIVITY AND SIZE OF PROJECTS.”**

**“LEADER IS EXACTLY THIS PROGRAMME THAT ALLOWS TO CREATE  
NEW NETWORKS AND TEST NEW INITIATIVES IN A FRIENDLY,  
SUPPORTING AND COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT, TAKING INTO  
ACCOUNT THE ACTUAL NEED IN LOCAL AREAS AND COMMUNITIES.”**

**“WITH THE HELP OF LEADER, RESEARCH,  
DEVELOPMENT AND SPECIALIZED TECHNOLOGY  
CAN ALSO BE RUN IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.”**

**“LEADER IS THE INCARNATION OF EUROPE  
IN OUR RURAL TERRITORIES.”**

**“USING THE LEADER APPROACH, WE WANT TO  
CREATE A WELL-KNOWN AND ECOLOGICALLY ACCEPTABLE  
DESTINATION WITH A RICH AUTOCHTHONOUS GASTRONOMIC  
OFFER AND SELF-SUSTAINABLE FAMILY FARMS.”**

**“LEADER IS STILL THE BEST AND RIGHT INSTRUMENT  
FOR INTEGRATED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND IS HIGHLY  
ACCEPTED AMONG THE LOCAL POPULATION.”**

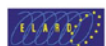
**“LEADER UNLEASHES THE CREATIVE POTENTIALS AND  
SKILLS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN RURAL REGIONS.”**

# A LEADER JOURNEY THROUGH RURAL EUROPE

.....

## NATIONAL LAG NETWORKS REVEALING THE DIVERSITY OF LEADER IMPLEMENTATION

NOVEMBER 2019



European Leader Association  
for Rural Development  
Brussels, [www.eldard.eu](http://www.eldard.eu)

Portuguese  
Presidency  
2018 - 2019



## ELARD, A NETWORK OF NETWORKS



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## WHAT THIS PUBLICATION IS ABOUT

ELARD started to grow fast in the last few years. Originally founded by only a hand full of national LAG networks at the end of the LEADER II period, ELARD now has 26 member organisations. ELARD is well recognised as the voice for LAGs in Europe, but until now the ELARD members never presented themselves all together in a publication. In a General Assembly in early 2019 the members therefore agreed to work on a publication where members could present what LEADER is about in their countries. LEADER practices have been chosen in a bottom-up way and presented in a flexible format.

Therefore, this publication contains for each country descriptions of the networks and also some emblematic projects. In some cases, the country chapter also contains an expert text, which describes LEADER on a more personal note.

The topics covered in the network descriptions tell us about recent activities of the networks as well as their goals and field of work. They also describe the challenges for LEADER and how it is performing in this programming period. Finally, they describe the wishes for the next programming period.

Approximately 50 descriptions of LEADER projects, ranging from very small local projects to larger infrastructure projects show the field of activity of LEADER all over Europe.

LEADER is covering a lot of issues which are important to strengthen the socio-economic fabric in rural areas. Some topics are:

- civic engagement, youth entrepreneurship
- social issues and working conditions, such as support for marginalized communities, integration, day care services
- support of SME as well as micro businesses, gastronomy, local products
- destination management
- cultural events
- e-mobility
- networks and regional trademarks
- preservation of cultural and natural heritage and environmental education
- infrastructure

Framing texts describe why the networks selected the projects (representing important topics of the countries, showcasing the uniqueness of LEADER).

In a number of expert texts, presidents of LEADER Networks or experienced LEADER practitioners on local level as well as researchers for rural development give a brief opinion about LEADER, leaving us with some hints of analysis of the impacts of LEADER on the ground.

We wish you a happy reading!



## INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader

As the current president of ELARD and at the occasion of the 20th anniversary of ELARD, I would like to proudly present this publication. There are many publications on LEADER, about the approach and with good practices. We wanted to show that ELARD – a network of networks - supports LEADER to be a strong movement in Europe's rural areas. Our national members represent in most cases all LEADER LAGs in their countries.

National Networks do an important work with Local Action Groups (LAGs) to carry out the work on the ground. They are the horsepower to enable ELARD, in a bottom up process, to defend the interests of rural areas and communities on the European level, as an umbrella network.

I am very happy that the diversity of LEADER in Europe can be shown in one publication, showing that it is alive, it is inspiring and that rural areas are counting on the support by the LAGs.

The emblematic projects which were selected by our members to be part of this publication are not only funded by LEADER (EAFRD), but also with other funds, showing very clearly that the multi-funding introduced in this period is carrying fruits. The wide thematic range of projects shows that LEADER is supporting projects in all Sustainable Development pillars – economic, environmental, social and cultural – like it always did. This is the way that LEADER must continue in the next programming period – a tool with a broad spectrum of application, not only focused on agriculture or any other sector, allowing LAGs and local stakeholders to really address their needs.

This publication was produced in crucial times for the destiny of LEADER. In 2019 and 2020 the European Institutions are discussing the future of LEADER and CLLD (Community-Led Local Development) and we will soon get to know how much European funding will be available for the LAGs Local Development Strategies in the post-2020 period. ELARD has in the past years issued the Tartu declaration on the future of LEADER as well as a position paper in early 2019. This publication complements our demands and underpins them with the reality about LEADER in our rural territories.

In the next years we – ELARD and our member networks - will continue our work, with a strong voice in each country and on European level, as we are convinced that LEADER/CLLD is bringing Europe closer to the citizens!

**MARIA JOÃO BOTELHO**  
President of ELARD (2018-2019)  
November 2019



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Communities as change agents: local development in the EU beyond 2020,  
European Week of Regions and Cities, Brussels | October 2017



2nd European Rural Parliament, Schärding, Austria | November 2015

## LEADER-FORUM AUSTRIA



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LEADER-forum Austria is an independent and voluntary association of all 77 LAGs in Austria. It was formally established in 2015 on the basis of an informal network of some LAG managers. The LEADER-forum offers the possibility for official and consistent representation of the CLLD/LEADER territories in committees, hearings and working groups at national and European level. It accompanies the implementation of LEADER and all questions around the approach in Austria and is the voice of the LAGs in the process of the design of the new programming period. The LAG network exists beside the Austrian Rural Network which was installed by the Managing Authority.

LEADER was introduced in Austria in 1995 at the time of Austria's accession to the EU and is a success story since then. 91% of the rural area is covered by the 77 LAGs in the period 2014-2020. The LEADER Budget in Austria is € 247 million.

Only 9 out of 77 LAGs are currently using the CLLD multi-fund approach with CLLD ERDF and LEADER EAFRD. The ESF is not included in CLLD and the EMFF is not very relevant for Austria as there is no sea and no coast.



The ideas for the next programming period were collected in a "position paper" of 6 pages which was handed over to the Managing Authority last year. In a nutshell the content is: Simplification, improved communication and governance as well as a strong focus on the LEADER approach. The trust of the authorities in the LAGs has to be increased, which demands some courage from the administration. But in general LEADER works quite well in Austria and is still seen as the best approach for integrated regional development.

## ZEITGEIST ENNS – POP-UP SHOP CONCEPT

TOTAL BUDGET: € 126.121

*The Pop-up shop project is an innovative idea to bring different actors together and fight against the economic desertification of town centres, with many small shops being closed down.*

Enns is a small town in Upper Austria. The nearby capital Linz, with its large retail areas and shopping centres, has left a visible mark: the amount of vacant retail space in downtown Enns is ever-increasing while customer traffic is dwindling.

In order to eliminate this disparity, it is essential to create innovative and tailor-made revitalization schemes that help to once again attract businesses and to minimize vacant space.

Within the project, it is the aim to revitalize the unwelcoming environment of semi-abandoned shopping precincts by introducing pop-up shops and to increase the number of visitors by offering a frequently changing range of services and products. Further goals are to increase the number of customers for all local businesses, to prevent further delocalisation of businesses, to promote the establishment of new businesses and to encourage long-term tenancies.

Now, there are fewer vacant retail spaces in the town centre. Customer traffic has increased by 43 % on “Linzer Straße” promenade. The project has significantly raised the profile of the town of Enns. These are just some of the many achievements of the project.

[www.popupstores.at](http://www.popupstores.at) / <https://www.facebook.com/popupstorennn/>

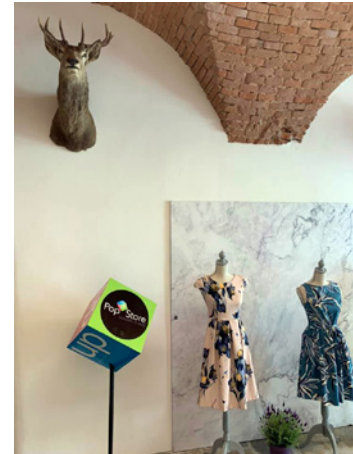
Many small towns in Austria have the problem of vacant sales space. This project is an innovative concept on how to revitalise city centres by offering flexible rental options to pop-up shops.

The project is becoming well-known. Excursions groups, from all over Austria and beyond, are regularly visiting the shops and there are many ideas on how to take the concept forward.

LEADER is the right instrument to try such innovative methods and encourage people to implement their ideas.

### THE POP-UP SHOP CONCEPT

Pop-up shops are temporary sales spaces which open for just some days up to several weeks in vacant stores before closing again, often to catch onto a recent trend or a seasonal business – or to provide low-cost spaces for young companies.



## “ENGAGIERT SEIN” (BEING COMMITTED)

TOTAL BUDGET: € 610.000

*Is it possible to increase civic engagement in a LAG territory?*



The project “Engagiert sein” builds on the experiences of another LEADER project of the LAG Regio-V, which is located in the Austrian province of Vorarlberg and which was carried out in the previous period. “Engagiert sein” demonstrates that people can be motivated to volunteer. But volunteer commitment needs to be locally mobilised and coordinated and this has to be done in collaboration with existing institutions. Municipalities which see volunteer commitment as an opportunity should establish a local coordinator to mobilise civic engagement.

As a result, the LAG hired five coordinators of volunteers who are supporting and mobilising civil engagement in 18 villages in a rural region. The coordinators are analysing development needs, mobilising citizens and supporting them in developing non-profit projects. 850 people started to become active in civic engagement in over 35 initiatives and more than 6.000 people benefited from these actions.

In cooperation with local expert organisations, the coordinators and the volunteers are able to better carry out tasks of civil engagement. Unused talents are mobilised within the project. The project also contributes to finding and using synergies between local organisations, schools, churches, social associations and municipalities. This strengthens the self-reliance and social capital of the villages.

<http://www.engagiert-sein.at/>

<https://www.regio-v.at/news/publikation-engagiert-sein>

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“Engagiert sein” represents bottom-up LEADER development in a very unique way, as in its core it acts as a driver for civic engagement. The project fosters participation and voluntary action. The work of the coordinators resulted in stronger ties between local organisations (different associations, municipal administration) as well as provincial administration. This initiative is highly transferable. There is a vivid exchange with other initiatives dealing with this issue, too.



## “LEADER/CLLD INSIGHTS”

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I work in the LEADER universe since 2005. Already at university my focus was on regional development and after an internship for several months at the Managing Authority for EU-funds in our province I went back to my home region and became the LAG manager.

Looking back, LEADER is still the best and right instrument for integrated regional development and is highly accepted among the local population. But somehow we have lost our mission. We focused too much on rules and regulations instead of believing and trusting in the LEADER approach and the responsibility of a region.

LEADER is not just a simple measure, it is an approach and therefore also LAGs have to act like independent regional development agencies and not just like outsourced administration bodies. Trust and courage of the administration needs to be stronger and we need to communicate LEADER in its whole facets, not just via funding money.



**STEFAN NIEDERMOSER**

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The Bulgarian national LEADER network was founded in 2012. It unites and represents the interests of 55 LAGs from Bulgaria thus uniting around 2000 organisations from rural areas of Bulgaria, covering about 50% of the territory. It actively works for the successful implementation of local development strategies of LAGs in Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian LEADER Network organizes trainings and working groups for capacity building and technical assistance. It addresses the needs of its members through collecting and developing common opinions and positions to the Managing

Authorities and Paying Agencies. The association also provides advocacy through communications and organizing meetings with representatives of official authorities responsible for the implementation of CLLD. The Bulgarian LEADER Network works actively for the development of international co-operation and for the presence and active participation of Bulgarian LAGs at EU level.

64 LAGs in Bulgaria are implementing LEADER/CLLD and 39 of them are multi-funded by EAFRD, ERDF and ESF. At the moment there is a delay of approval by the Paying Agency (State Fund Agriculture) for projects funded by EAFRD.

In 2018 the Association initiated and successfully co-organised the international conference "FUTURE OF LEADER/CLLD 2020+" in Albena, Bulgaria together with ELARD and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry.

For the next programming period the Bulgarian National LEADER Network wants to work on the multi-funding of CLLD, providing higher budgets for the approach in all ESIF and setting a single Managing Authority and common rules for its implementation.

## CREATING GOOD AND SAFE WORKING CONDITIONS AT IVEGEL EOOD

**TOTAL BUDGET: € 40.303 (ESF)**

*The drain of work force is a big problem in our region that we wanted to tackle with this project.*

The beneficiary of the project is Ivegel EOOD - a company for processing, drying and canning of mushrooms, vegetables and other agricultural products. Through the project, the company introduced a set of measures designed to improve the working environment, create safe and healthy working conditions and provide social benefits in order to retain human resources in the enterprise.

Under the project a removable and fully equipped container was purchased, in which recreation, dining and sports facilities were set up for workers. Also, the workshop was modernized in order to create comfortable working conditions, reduce the risks to the health of workers and improve the microclimate in the enterprise.

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Human resources development is recognized as a very important priority for the local development in Bulgaria. The LAG Kostenets 2010 defined "Good and safe working conditions" as a core measure, acknowledging the fact that businesses in Kostenets are experiencing increasing difficulty in finding and retaining skilled labor due to the migration of workers to larger cities and abroad.



## SOCIO-ECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES SUCH AS ROMA IN RAKOVSKI MUNICIPALITY

TOTAL BUDGET: € 97.396 (ESF)

*We wanted to improve the health, social and educational services for children from marginalized communities.*

The project involves the provision of health, social and educational services that are targeted entirely at children from marginalized communities - such as Roma and their families - in the municipality of Rakovski. It comprises several measures: The project aims at improving the health, social and educational services by constructing two centers in the municipality of Rakovski, where health mediators, hosts and educators – amongst others – train and support young parents in the skills of confident, positive parenting. The project also aims at preventing early school leavings.

Six “educational mediators” were trained to support the connections between teachers, parents and students in the educational process and beyond. Finally, the project tries to overcome negative stereotypes and share good practices on local community development together with different stakeholders of the educational process.



Promotion of social inclusion is one of the directions of high importance especially in the rural areas in Bulgaria. Therefore, the LAG Rakovski has planned a specific measure in their strategy directed towards socio-economic integration of marginalized communities.





## INCREASING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF “AMEK TOYS” LTD.

TOTAL BUDGET: € 13.2970 (ERDF)

*We wanted to increase the productivity and enhance the export potential.*

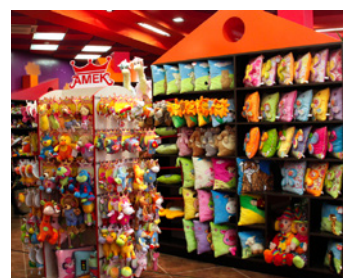
The company AmEk Toys Ltd. was founded in 1999. The company is a leader in the production and sales of plush toys in Bulgaria.

The main objective of the project was to improve the international competitiveness of the beneficiary AmEk Toys Ltd. by increasing the productivity and enhancing the export potential of the enterprise.

Within the project automatic machines for programmable seams with a laser device were purchased, which had a positive impact on the productivity of the enterprise as well as on the resource efficiency.

Through the implementation of the project “AmEk Toys” Ltd. has improved its competitiveness and secured a stable market presence at the most adequate cost-benefit ratio.

Increasing innovations and improving competitiveness of businesses across rural areas of Bulgaria is a focal point of LEADER/ CLLD implementation and the results of this are already visible – about 30 contracts for increasing productivity, export potential and competitiveness of companies from rural areas are in progress or completed. LAG Maritsa is actively working on realizing opportunities for local business development and enhancing the competitiveness of the local economy.





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<https://www.facebook.com/Hrvatska.mreza.za.ruralni.razvoj>

The Croatian Rural Development Network (HMRR) is a network of civil society organizations established in 2006, connecting civil society organizations in Croatia for joint action, partnerships and knowledge transfer with the vision of improving conditions for quality living in rural areas. The network today has 43 members, of which 32 are LAGs.

Ever since the foundation of the first Croatian LAG in 2008, to which the HMRR contributed, the LEADER approach spread throughout rural areas, with 54 fully operating LAGs implementing the LEADER concept in Croatia today. The majority of the local communities think that LAGs can be the main wheel for rural development through the LEADER approach in our country.

HMRR initiated and organized three Croatian Rural Parliaments. The topics were “Perspectives for young people in rural areas” (2015), “Integral development through cooperation” (2017) and “Smart villages” (2019), with the aim to give a voice and opportunity to rural communities to influence the policy and implementation of rural development. More than 200 people participated to the 1st Rural Parliament and more than 300 in both the 2nd and 3rd (website: [ruralniparlament.com/](http://ruralniparlament.com/)).

In the forthcoming years HMRR will continue to strongly and constructively take part in advocating and shaping rural policies, especially having in mind the new EU programming period and the development of national strategic plans relevant for rural development.

Multi-funding doesn't exist yet in our country, but there is strong support and interest in this approach which is expected to be implemented in the future.

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The LEADER Network Croatia is a national non-governmental organization was established in 2012. As a national umbrella association of LAGs in the Republic of Croatia it is based in the Croatian Ministry of Agriculture, in the Department of Rural Development, EU and International Cooperation. It stands as a reference for implementing the policy of programming and executing the LEADER/ CLLD approach to the development of local areas. In cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Paying Agency for Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development, it provides coordination and daily technical support to LAGs and their development stakeholders in the design and implementation of local development strategies and a decentralized approach to local development as a whole.

## INTEGRAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INTEGRA LIKA 2020

*When HMRR is asked about the evidence that LEADER is actually supporting rural communities, the project “Integra Lika 2020 and Lika Quality” can be shown as an exemplary case.*



LAG LIKA occupies 11% of the territory of the Republic of Croatia. Over 30% of the LAG's territory is under a certain degree of natural protection, with an exceptional geomorphic position and a challenging area for producing ecological food and tourism development. Therefore, LAG LIKA launched a major five-year project funded by national and EU funds, which encompasses a wide range of economic segments and is divided into 5 focus areas: agriculture, identity creation, tourism, self-sustainability and ecology.

The vision is to create a globally recognizable destination, eco-



logically acceptable with a rich autochthonous gastronomic offer and self-sustainable family farms. INTEGRA LIKA 2020 is an integral part of the Local Development Strategy.

To brand the region, the project has introduced the regional quality label “Lika Quality”, awarded to traditional regional products and services of high quality. To date the Lika Quality label has been awarded to 170 products from 62 manufacturers.



Amongst others, several farmers' markets were held in the region and different three-day excursions “Stay 3 Days in Lika” were designed in order to extend the stay of tourists.

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The specificity of INTEGRA LIKA 2020 is reflected in the integrated approach of sustainable development of the area, considering all key economic and social segments of the rural area and involving all key local stakeholders by using the bottom-up approach. The national network helped to give visibility to the project and supported the organization of project events.





## NETWORK OF LOCAL ACTION GROUPS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech network consists of 167 LAGs, which are grouped in regional networks. In this programming period, LAGs can use funding from four Funds for the Czech countryside, totalling over 600 million euros. Designing multi-funded CLLD was a big challenge. LAGs had to prepare for a wide range of topics - through social programs, primary education, climate protection, and rural traffic themes. Innovative brokering in the smart village concept is a challenge for us for the new programming period, as well as supporting SMEs in innovation, digitization and increasing the competitiveness of the Czech countryside.



## ONE STEP AHEAD: HOW TO PREPARE CHILDREN FOR LIFE AFTER THE ORPHANAGE

TOTAL BUDGET: € 60.000

*The LAG Hradecký venkov combined needs and assets to create a unique project that inspires LAGs and rural communities across the Czech Republic.*

The project “One Step Ahead” of the LAG Hradecký venkov targets young people who spent most of their lives in an orphanage in the village of Nechanice which is close to the regional capital city Hradec Králové. The project focuses on children with special educational needs who come from disadvantaged families, who are at a high risk of social exclusion or are growing up in foster care.

“In our project there are currently six young people involved for whom we are trying to make it easier to leave the orphanage and prepare them for their lives afterwards. We want them to be informed about possibilities of housing in the region, to be able to manage their financial situation and to participate in the local labour market” says Iva Horníková, project manager of the LAG.

“We arrange work placements with local businesses for the youngsters we work with. We always choose a specific employer based on the child's study focus. For example, boys who learn to repair agricultural machinery visit a farm where they learn everything about its operation. In doing so, we are also preparing them for things which are important to apply for a job, such as writing a CV or performing at an interview” concludes Horníková.



The project is unique as it gives young people from children's homes the chance to find work and accommodation in a place they know. The project builds a support network against both social exclusion and rural depopulation. The project activities also respond to the lack of workforce in rural areas. The concept can be easily implemented in other countries.



## PRONANOTECH

TOTAL BUDGET: € 6.250



*Scientific technology is not just a privilege of capital cities.*

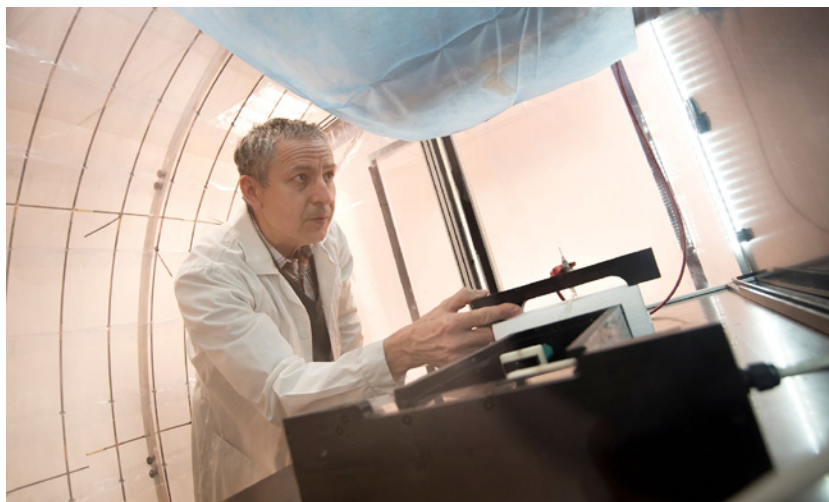
The project was carried out by a small company located in the countryside of southern Bohemia. ProNANOtech is engaged in the production of nanofibrous materials intended primarily for use in medical applications and in the cosmetics industry or as biosensors. The company is also focused on the development of new cosmetics and aims to produce in an environment-friendly way. Due to a long-term cooperation with the LAG, the company didn't apply directly to the EAFRD national call but to CLLD funding.

The company was founded in 2004 to undertake research for the application of innovative technologies in regenerative medicine, but decided later to focus on the development and production of new materials, especially the functionalization of nanofibers and their derivatives.

The LEADER funding provided the business with equipment like a cryogenic grinder for grinding semi-finished chemical fibre products and the purchase of a magnetic stirrer that serves to mix the polymers from which the nanofibrous fabric.

---

This small project had a great impact on local territory and promotion of science in rural areas. It can be regarded as extremely important for the image of CLLD in the Czech countryside: Scientific technology is not just a privilege for capitals. Research, development and specialized technology can also be run in the countryside.





LAGs' Global Networks Seminar, Sastamala, Finland | June 2011



ELARD Training, Strengthening Rural Development Models in Georgia | October 2018



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In 2018, the Danish LAG's and FLAG's chose to enter into a formalised co-operation with The National Council for Rural Affairs of Denmark called Landdistrikternes Fællesråd, which is an organisation of many different actors, who share a special focus on rural development. Members of this organisation range from large companies, industry organizations, institutions, municipalities, community representatives, etc. and the organisation is considered as one of the major actors (a strong political voice) when talking about rural development in Denmark.

The work with LEADER / CLLD in Denmark has during the current program period been exposed to major administrative and political challenges; which the LAGs experience as growing mistrust from the EU system towards the national set-up.

In Denmark, the LAGs want multi-funding to be an option in the coming program period. In the current period, some of the LAGs have an integrated development strategy, working within both EAFRD and EMFF. LAGs in Denmark want to expand the possibilities within the multi-funding enabling LAGs to work with also the ERDF and the ESF. The Danish Managing Authorities – in cooperation with LAGs – have developed an electronic application system called PROMIS. This system seems to be

a really good digital application system and the Danish LAGs believe the system will also be able to handle applications within ERDF and ESF.



## COLD HAND WINERY

**TOTAL BUDGET: € 325.000 (FOR 3 LEADER-FUNDED PROJECTS)**

### *LEADER – a “game-changer” within Danish Food Production*

Funds from the LEADER program have helped kick-start a fruit wine adventure that has evolved to include experience tourism with an outdoor gourmet restaurant called “Cold Hand on Fire”.

LAG Randers-Favrskov has supported two projects at “Cold Hand Winery” in this programming period (2014-2020) and one project in the former period (2007-2013).

The initial project (2011), which started as Apple Ice wine, gave name to Cold Hand Winery. Apple ice wine refers to the cryo-concentration method, where frozen apple juice is thawed at low degrees; to ensure that only sweetness and the best natural flavours enters the winemaking process. Working outdoor close to freezing gives very cold hands hence the name and the logo with the blue hand.

In 2016, Cold Hand Winery was expanded with the first newly build winery in Denmark, as the need to upscale production was urgent, and the building also enables more innovation. Production equipment and fixtures in the new building were supported by the LAG with € 40.000.

In 2019 Cold Hand Winery opened “Cold Hand on Fire”, an outdoor experience area, where people can sit in huge wine barrels and at large plank tables, under a big sail, being served gourmet food and local fruit wines cooked by the best chefs on an open fire. This project also received support from the LAG of € 40.000.

By mid-2019 Cold Hand Winery has 15 employees; products being awarded medals and honour at the biggest fairs for fruit wine.

<https://www.coldhandwinery.dk>



80-85% of Danish food production goes to export. In recent years, however, there has been a significant shift, especially in relation to Danish consumers' interest in Danish as well as locally produced food. The so-called New Nordic Kitchen's focus on storytelling and “knowing your raw material” has opened the doors to a market trend where entrepreneurship in rural areas is given new opportunities.

Like many LAGs in Denmark, LAG-Randers chose to focus on local food, experiencing tourism and site-based potentials. Stakeholders within LEADER benefited from the experiences made in other countries, where farm shops and small-scale farm-based food production have been far more prevalent than in Denmark. Through the LAGs in Denmark, experience has been shared, by informal and more formal food networks - especially with the emergence of the European network Culinary Heritage Europe (originally founded as an interregional cooperation between South East Skåne and LAG-Bornholm – supported by LEADER II).

## FARMSHOP OF THE CITY

TOTAL BUDGET: € 92.000

*The aim of this project is to sell and tell about locally produced food and convey messages and experiences in the culinary field.*

“Farmshop of the city” is located in Vestergade in the city center of Svendborg. Since opening in 2017 the store has become a great showcase for small local food producers who received better and more opportunities for marketing and disseminating their products. The “farmshop of the city” is open daily and follows normal opening hours. An important focal point is the store's electric-powered van and loading bike, which contributes with logistic services, by fetching and distributing food from local producers to the farm shop, local kitchens, eateries and other sales outlets. The employees share their knowledge of the products and show the way to the producers. There are tastings, current seasonal items and food themes presented. The store is run as a social economy company that offers employment and upgrading to vulnerable groups on the edge of the labour market.

“Farmshop of the city” has within the first year created various job functions: A full-time manager, a communication employee and five flexi jobs at varied hours. In addition, the farm shop has several internships and also clarification courses in collaboration with the job center as well as internal clarification processes. In June 2018, the “Farmshop of the city” opened the doors to a cosy café serving local products inside and outside. With this extension, additional employees have been hired.

The project was chosen on the basis that it fully complied with LAG SØM's development strategy, where they chose to focus specifically on potentials in tourism, food and culture, and where the area's natural and cultural values are fully utilized.





## “LEADER/CLLD INSIGHTS”

LEADER as a method has now worked for more than 25 years in Denmark. Despite its modest financial framework, the methodological approach has seriously taken root and managed to engage thousands of energetic rural developers. The results speak for themselves! But the democratic anchorage of LEADER - now called CLLD - of the recent programming period has been important - and is important in the further work for both the legitimization and the anchoring of method and the support for the common European project that helps to link rural areas and the cities together.



### **HANS JØRGEN JENSEN**

Coordinator of LAG-Bornholm, must be described as Denmark's “Grand old man” within LEADER and CLLD • For almost 25 years, he has worked with LEADER on the island in the Baltic Sea – Bornholm. • He is well-known in European LEADER circles and has also been active as the Danish expert of FARNET for some years.

## ESTONIAN LEADER UNION

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The Estonian LEADER Union was established on 19 March 2012. Currently, 20 Estonian LAGs are members of the Union. The Union has a board of 7 members, and one full time employee. Most of the activities are based on thematic working groups (e.g. communication, legislation, CLLD 2020+, etc.) that bring together representatives from all member LAGs.

In 2016-2017, the Estonian LEADER Union held the presidency of ELARD and LAG Tartu County Development Association manager Kristiina Tamets became the first female president of ELARD.

In order to achieve its goals, the Estonian LEADER Union:

- represents members' common interests in national institutions, community groups and international organisations;
- takes part in national and international discussions concerning rural areas;
- represents members' interests as a social partner in drafting LEADER activity regulations;
- supports members' cooperation and creates various cooperation opportunities;
- organises training and networking activities for its members;
- arranges legal aid and advises on legal issues;
- takes part in various projects and cooperation networks on international, national, regional or local levels.

Recent Estonian Leader Union activities that have had a significant impact on policy making in LEADER:

- Monitoring committee under the Ministry of Agriculture assessing RDP implementation and determining the National Rural Development Plan and new Leader regulations;
- Working group of the Estonian Regional Development Strategy;
- Representation at ELARD since 2011;
- Representation at the European Rural Networks Assembly;
- Initiator and leader of the CLLD multi-fund working group in Estonia involving all LEADER actors and partner associations.

## TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROJECT 5\*NATURE

TOTAL BUDGET: € 297.000

*LEADER is exactly the programme that allows the creation of new networks and test new initiatives in friendly, supporting and collaborative environment, taking into account the actual need in local areas and communities.*

“5\*Nature” involves tourist areas from Finland, Estonia, Italy, Hungary and Spain. Five LAGs started working to promote tourism in rural areas with a high nature quality and very valuable resources, in order to explore and improve the opportunities for international tourism, detecting good practices on nature tourism, training for entrepreneurs and funding a network involving 4 countries.

The cooperation project comprises several study trips to the different regions. After every study trip the participants decide what was most inspirational and what they would like to implement on local level. Entrepreneurs choose their roles in the implementing team and LAGs fund the mini projects. For example, after a study trip to Spain, where a local low season festival was visited, Estonian entrepreneurs decided to also start a low season festival in Estonia. It was named Porikuu festival (Mud Month Festival). With the experience shared by the Spanish partners they were able to offer 83 events in 2018, visited by 5000 people. This year it takes place again in a larger area encompassing neighbouring LAG territories.

The biggest success of the project is not only to get to know the best practices of each region, but the possibility to directly implement them.

<https://www.facebook.com/5starnature/>



This project is run by the Estonian LAG itself with the help of 4 sub-project managers and a big network of tourism entrepreneurs. They have become a great team that has brought visible change to the LAG areas. In the current period, international cooperation projects have been in the focus in Estonia, as there has been a lot of flexibility in the rules and possibilities for innovation in such projects.

The potential benefits produced by nature and culture tourism for the host regions and the involved stakeholders are huge and many sided. Nature tourism is an important opportunity to diversify local rural economies that have lost part of their economic base.

## TARTU COUNTY YOUTH FUND – FOR SMALL-SCALE YOUTH PROJECTS

**TOTAL BUDGET: APPROX. € 50.000**

*More than 100 great ideas have been brought to fruition in order to promote the entrepreneurial mindset of young people.*

Back in 2010 there were a lot of young people leaving the countryside due to weak connections with their home villages and communities. The LEADER measure would have been too complicated for young people to apply for funding, although the local development strategy contained a special youth measure.

Therefore, the LAG decided to establish the “Tartu County Youth Fund for small-scale youth projects” together with the youth council.



The Youth Fund has now a history of 9 years. More than 100 great ideas have been brought to fruition in order to promote the entrepreneurial mindset of young people, covering a very wide spectrum of activities initiated by them – youth camps, festivals, a variety of training courses, business idea development, equipment, IT and robotics, etc. So far, approximately € 50.000 has been invested in the Youth Fund over the whole timespan.



Due to this success they started a second umbrella project in 2018 to support projects with a specific focus on entrepreneurship.

[www.tas.ee](http://www.tas.ee)

This youth fund is unique in several ways: it works from youth to youth, it offers minimal bureaucracy due to a special project implementation scheme and young people can already apply for funding at the age of 12.



The project tackles the demographic change from a very interesting perspective. It gives young people more responsibility and at the same time it builds a stronger connection between the youth and the region by supporting active and entrepreneurial mindsets. During this EU programming period, the umbrella project mechanism was established for LAGs which opened the window of opportunity for this project. It is therefore also easy to transfer.

## “LEADER/CLLD INSIGHTS”

Estonia has been implementing LEADER measures for the development of rural areas since 2006. The opportunity proved to be very popular since the beginning and the programme has spread to cover the whole rural population since 2009.

LEADER has been especially attractive to young entrepreneurs and acting small enterprises, NGOs and rural municipalities, providing financial assistance that is not available from any other programme. It has contributed significantly to the collaboration between communities, private and public sector. Collective actions and networking have helped to raise the sense of community and common identity. There are a growing number of people in rural areas who have developed a habit of co-working and who want to be included in the development of their home region. People are able to think in terms of the whole region and to consider its future.

During the 12 years of LEADER in Estonia it has:

- developed the local culture, leisure activities, local products and services, rural tourism, local food, creative industry and other non-agricultural enterprises;
- created community kitchens, bread houses, workshops of national building, centres of product development, etc;
- initiated tourism projects: hiking routes, yellow windows; networks of tourism and local food;
- elaborated labels of local products or services;
- created or preserved jobs in rural areas;
- initiated several traditional events, like days of home cafeterias in various regions.
- The National Rural Network has also had a significant role in the success of the LEADER programme. It has been a stable pillar of support for the network of LEADER LAGs, providing information, advice, training and mediating the cooperation.



**KERSTI ARO**

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## FINNISH VILLAGE MOVEMENT ASSOCIATION



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The Finnish Village Movement Association (in Finnish: Suomen Kylät ry) was established in 1997. The Association is an umbrella organisation for regional actors in rural development. Resident Associations, village coalitions, LAGs and national central organisations are members of the Village Movement Association. Overall it has 125 member organizations and it represents over 4000 local communities. The network organized LEADER parliaments and meetings for LAGs twice a year in cooperation with the National Rural Network, as well as the Finnish Rural Parliament for the first time in 2017. It also supports the Quality Management work of LEADER LAGs. Challenges during this period were the negotiations with the Paying Agency about the interpretation of different regulations and to get the preparations for the next period started nationally with the ministries.

In the upcoming years the Finnish Village Movement Association wants to try and find ways to promote and implement multi-fund CLLD in Finland.



## RURAL ARTS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT MULLISTAJA

TOTAL BUDGET: € 123.546

*Connecting people and enabling creativity in rural areas is something this project and art in itself is able to do.*

Seinäjoki is the centre of South Ostrobothnia and one the fastest growing urban areas in Finland. The city is surrounded by small rural districts such as Ilmajoki and Kurikka which are part of the LAG Seinäjoki area. Seinäjoki is widely known from its versatile music and theatre events, but it has only two art galleries – and especially in the rural areas where artists lack working studios and employment possibilities. Therefore, supporting visual arts in rural areas is the key theme of Mullistaja – a LEADER funded project, organised by the Seinäjoki Art Hall. The Mullistaja Art Project seeks to create networks by connecting art professionals with rural stakeholder groups like farmers, small businesses and researchers.

Within the Mullistaja project visits were organised to milk farms and a bike factory to get to know different ways of working in the rural areas as well as workshops about the relationship between artistic work and various themes related to the countryside such as agriculture, architecture, rural culture or country landscapes. The two main questions of the project were how to profit from the rural scenery and how to develop co-working opportunities between artists and rural communities.

The project is a good example of how LEADER operates multisectorally and finds employment possibilities even outside ‘regular’ fields of business, showing the innovative character of the programme. In Finland there is no particular national LEADER focus, but the project fits perfectly into the regional context.



## SILTA – BRIDGE

TOTAL BUDGET: € 56.620

*There has been a gap between trial entrepreneurship and full-time entrepreneurship – SILTA is now filling it.*

Young people in Finland are able to experiment entrepreneurial activities in a variety of practical educational business programs. But at the end of these programs or when their businesses grow, they are often left alone. They may not even receive support from school or home and are not ready to set up a limited company on their own. There has been a gap between trial entrepreneurship and full-time entrepreneurship, even though young people's interest in entrepreneurship is high and has grown in the last years. SILTA, which means bridge, is a LEADER funded project which is now filling this existing gap in Reisjärvi in Northern Ostrobothnia.

Organised as a cooperative, it provides an education model, where young entrepreneurs can learn how to run businesses on their own or in a group, get mentoring, learn and develop their businesses and spur each other on.

Until now around 60 young people have joined the cooperative – almost entirely run by young people. The turnover is now more than € 200.000.

Project beneficiary name/ organisation: Reisjärven Kristillinen kansanopistoyhdistys, NGO to support the activities of the Christian community college

[www.silta.rkropisto.fi](http://www.silta.rkropisto.fi)

## “LEADER/CLLD INSIGHTS”

In LEADER, local and regional vitality is promoted on the basis of the ideas and needs of the inhabitants. The sophistication of the action is that the development combines the competence and the place-based expertise of local residents. As a special feature, the non-profit, common-good viewpoint encourages to openness and to wider collaboration between different local actors. Besides, hardly any other funding allows such a large scale of creativity and size of projects. Responsibility is taken, given and born, which can be seen in effective results, as satisfied residents, as a better community and as a local vitality. LEADER action in Finland is all this.

The positive story of the Finnish LEADER action is also told by the fact that the activity covers the whole countryside and almost the whole country. The LEADER action can be carried out anywhere, which has been noticed also in the Finnish cities and towns. Especially during the last programming period (2014-2020) several LAGs have taken action also in urban Finland. This, in turn, is a positive step in the sense that the urban and rural is seen in wholeness, as a functional continuum of the everyday life of the inhabitants and communities.

LEADER rocks and goes strong in Finland. One can always improve, develop, renew and become more integrated, but one can also be happy for a good reason. And say it out loud - even in Finland.



**SAMI TANTARINMÄKI**

PhD, Coordinator, Brahea Centre at the University of Turku • Active actor on the field of the rural development, research and policy (LEADER, Village Action, thematic work on Smart Villages, National Network for Rural Development, National Rural Policy Networks)



## LEADER FRANCE - FRENCH FEDERATION OF LAGS

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Created in 1997 on the initiative of the LAGs, LEADER France is the only dedicated network to defend the fundamentals of LEADER (innovation, capitalization, cooperation, bottom-up approach, etc.) and the most efficient management of the program. Member of many national and European institutions, LEADER France is a recognized partner and communicates the difficulties for the Programme in the territories as well as the value of their successes.

LEADER France now represents the 339 rural areas involved in the LEADER approach in France in the programme 2014-2020. The federation's action plan is based on four major objectives:

- Consolidate the network of LAGs and the regional and national partnerships of the actors of the Leader approach.
- Represent LAGs in national and European bodies to relay their expectations and difficulties.
- Accompany the LAGs in the implementation of the program and highlight their successes and good practices.
- Defend the place of rural development in European policies.

This programme is the fifth generation of LEADER in France and has evolved considerably (from 40 French LAGs in 1991 to 340 French LAGs). It mobilises 5% of the EAFRD envelope, i.e. €687 million for 2014-2020 in France. This represents an allocation per territory of €1 to €2 million of EAFRD.

For the next programming period, the position of France is in favour of continuity of LEADER / CLLD but with changes required in implementation so as to return to the fundamentals.

## SHARED MUNICIPAL CAR TO OPEN UP THE VILLAGE OF VILLEROUGE-TERMENÈS OF THE LAG EST-AUDOIS

TOTAL BUDGET: €45.000

*Buying a shared vehicle became reality for the inhabitants of a small, isolated municipality in Aude, thanks to the support of the LEADER program.*

The small town of VilleroUGE-Termenès, 140 inhabitants, located in the heart of the Corbières massif in a sparsely populated area, remote from public services and shops. In order to respond to the transport difficulties, especially for young people and the elderly, the town hall has acquired an electric car to be shared. Recharged by a photovoltaic shade, this carsharing car opens up the territory and employs an ecological and innovative solution to sustainable mobility issues in this rural area. Residents or tourists can rent the car at a modest cost for short trips thanks to an online platform and a digital box. In addition, the introduction of carpooling helps strengthening the social bond and cooperation among the village population. Operational since July 2018, the project fulfils its operational objectives with 9 half-days of rent per week and 1/3 of the inhabitants using the service. The 80% financing by the LEADER program, the Department of Aude and the Occitanie Region made the project economically viable for the municipality.

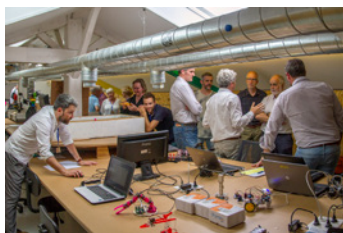
This project is the perfect example of the bottom-up approach since it starts from an idea launched by inhabitants which gets integrated into a broader project of sustainable development launched by the territory of the LAG.



## DEPLOYING A FABLAB WORKSHOP IN SOUSTONS (LAG ADOUR LANDES OCEANES)

TOTAL BUDGET: € 73.000

*Together we created a place where projects emerge with collaborative ways of working between public and actors of the local life.*



“L’Etabli” is a FabLab (“fabrication laboratory”) deployed on the territory of the intercommunal MACS (Maremne Adour Côte-Sud), located in the south of the Landes department. It is a device oriented on 2 initial axes: “Economic action” and “Education and youth”. The FabLab is in French a ‘Tiers Lieux’ (a “third place”), a collective, collaborative and community workshop in rural areas dedicated to the digital economy. It’s a place where projects emerge with collaborative ways of working between public actors and local residents. This workshop is an opportunity to bring many sectors and generations together (e.g. craftsmen, designers, artists, private companies) to share knowledge and know-how.

Moreover, “L’Etabli” aims to make a contribution to the digital transformation of the southern Landes territory through a programming of various activities:

- Scientific mediations and animations on digital themes (open doors, exhibitions, demonstrations, colloquia, business-university meetings ...);
- Thematic workshops (3D printing, electronics, robotics, computer programming ...);
- FabLab equipment and software trainings, digital manufacturing concepts;
- Support for the realization and conduct of digital projects (economy, culture, arts, education);
- Provision of equipment and skills;
- Discovery and crafts workshops;
- Activities in the field of SSE and integration.

The function of the “Tiers Lieux” is also supported by the establishment of a space dedicated to the reception of nomadic workers. This space includes a meeting room and open-space offices.

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This project shows the capacity to innovate in rural territories from work between different actors. It is representative of the added value of the LEADER approach. FabLab “L’Etabli” is the result of interterritorial cooperation and public / private partnership. It’s a place where projects emerge in the same way as in a LAG, where one comes with ideas, projects, questions and solicits complementary skills, prototypes, experiments, adapting, testing, development and then from there starts marketing concrete products and services.

## “LEADER/CLLD INSIGHTS”

CLLD is one of the symbols of a dynamic and innovative rurality which is integrated in the construction of Europe and in the societal development.

Rurality, in whatever form, plays a major role in the development of the French national territory. In order to continue its development, rurality has to be not only accompanied, but rather carried out and organised by the local actors as well as the public powers.

To enable these territories to take themselves in charge, the CLLD approach and in particular LEADER is THE best adapted method to take into account the development needs of rural territories,

- in verification a framework with bottom-up procedures;
- by involving the citizens and the forces at the side of the public development partners;
- by organizing the networking of territories and the capitalization of experiences;
- promoting cooperation between the territories at national and international level;
- supporting innovation and experimentation.

The importance of this programme goes far beyond its direct financial impact. Its intrinsic functioning allowed the emergence of innovative projects in the territories which have been models for all European territories. It also contributes directly to a European citizenship, notably through the measure for cooperation between rural territories. This programme is the incarnation of Europe in our rural territories, in each municipality and in each French village.

For the current programming period, 339 LAGs in France propose a new conception mode and conditions of life of the populations concerned. The changes that are required in the rural world cannot be achieved without the active participation of the actors.

The goal is to make the rural world an environment of development, economic, social, environmental, and development innovation for professional actors and populations. LEADER programs now cover nearly 80% of the national territory. It deserves investment. If rurality is often associated with the history of France and our identity, it must, more than ever, be a strong axis of its future.



**THIBAUT GUIGNARD**

President of LEADER France (since 2015) • President of the LAG of Saint-Brieuc (since 2014) • Head of the LAG Pays de St-Brieuc-Sud (2008-2015) • Parliamentary assistant (2009-2015) • Mayor of Ploeu-c-L'Hermitage (since 2014) and First Vice-President of the Departmental Council of Côtes d'Armor in charge of the General Administration, territorial contracts, European Union and decentralised cooperation (2015)



## GERMAN LEADER ASSOCIATION

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The German LEADER Association (BAG LAG) was found in 2016 with initially 18 LAGs. At present there are 167 LAGs members of the BAG LAG.

The aim of the association is to strengthen the bottom-up approach and the LEADER method at all political and social levels in Germany and in the EU as well as to cooperate with LAGs from all Member States.

We believe that the active participation of regional and local actors in the development and implementation of regional or local strategies is an important basis for sustainable development in our rural areas.

We want

- to optimise the framework for the work of the LAGs, especially for the implementation of the bottom-up approach
- to represent the German LAGs at federal and European Union level
- to promote the exchange of experience and networking as part of the rural development
- to work for a continuous development of the LEADER-approach
- to support rural areas and their stakeholders.





## SCHOOLYARD FESTIVALS HOCHSAUERLAND

TOTAL BUDGET: € 60.000

*LEADER unleashes the creative potentials and skills of young people in rural regions.*

Before the summer holidays in 2018, the schoolyards of the five schools in central Germany were turned into festival stages financed, – financed by the LEADER project “Youth Culture in the Region of Hochsauerland”.

Within three months, about 140 young people became project managers in voluntary festival-workshops and planned, organized and implemented their own festivals. The students set up five colourful festival programs, assisted by a professional team from a youth centre, providing a stage for young artists of the region. Also, the teachers were involved in the planning process in order to institutionalise the event. In total, over 4000 young people, also from neighbouring schools, participated in the festivals. Furthermore, the project was the starting point for many students to develop new projects, partly funded by LEADER, such as open-air concerts, graffiti and skating workshops, a volleyball tournament and a stage play. This was another great success of the project, as only a few young people in the region knew about LEADER before the festivals and even less applied for funding. Also in this year, the students organised festivals at their schools, funded by a regional fund for cultural affairs. In the following years they expect to become independent from funding as internal structures emerged to support the new festival tradition.



Particularly in rural areas, there is a lack of attractive cultural events or other motivating impulses for young people, which can lead to a low cultural development and thus to unused creative potentials and skills. The project greatly showcases how to provide young people with opportunities to develop their skills and to present their artistic talents in public.

In a broader context the project enables young people from rural regions (as well as others involved) to engage in their living environment transferring the experiences from the project to other areas of life and becoming important multipliers to start projects.



## HELLENIC NETWORK OF LOCAL ACTION GROUPS CLLD/LEADER

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[www.grnetleader.net](http://www.grnetleader.net)

The Hellenic Network of LAGs was an initiative of the Hellenic LAGs of LEADER I, 1992-1995. It evolved in LEADER II, during the LEADER+ period it was represented by a lead LAG partner, had semi-annual assemblies as well as national and regional steering committees. Currently the network is undergoing a transformation into a legal entity and aspires to continue implementing a wide range of activities assisting its members and the social capital of the LEADER areas. At this moment, the network has 48 members which are long standing local legal entities implementing in this period 52 local programs from 3 funds (EAFRD, EMFF and ESF) with a total budget of € 384 million.

Initially the network aimed at the animation and information of the rural areas about the LEADER initiatives. Now and in the future, it works on challenges such as efficient transfer of knowledge, advocacy, cooperation, technical assistance, policy making, capacity building, evaluation of results, societal issues etc. It acts as a focus group for the Hellenic LAGs and FLAGs in close cooperation with Greek NRN, representing the rural territories of Greece in National and international Fora advocating for the needs of the local rural areas.

CLLD/LEADER in Greece involves mainly EAFRD and EMFF at national operational program level but also in some regions ESF at regional level. The multi funding approach presents challenges mainly due to the loose links in the administrative system which does not allow the full exploitation of the benefits of combining various funds and policies at local community level.



## LEONIDIO CLIMBING PARK

TOTAL BUDGET: € 95.768

*Leonidio Climbing Park is ranked as one of the most popular climbing destinations worldwide, contributing to the protection of biodiversity and offering comfortable alternative tourism infrastructure.*

The Municipality of South Kynouria is an area which is economically linked to agricultural production, seasonal and religious tourism. However, in recent years considering the economic crisis in Greece, the tourist season has shrunk along with the number of visitors resulting also to a rise in youth unemployment. There was a need of finding an alternative way of tackling these issues. The idea for the implementation of a climbing park matured in the homonymous project as a part of the local LEADER program 2007-2013 of LAG PARNONAS through cooperation with the Municipality of South Kynouria and Alpine Club of Athens. Rock climbing in the Leonidio area began in the 80's due to rocks that local people call Kokkinovrachos (Red rock) which are overlooking the city centre and are inextricably linked to the traditional settlement. The project included the opening of new climbing routes, the realisation of a climbing festival and creation of a climbing guide. With respect to tradition, culture and natural environment this alternative tourism project managed to bring visible economic benefits to the area, improve the quality of life of inhabitants and last but not least contribute to the promotion of a natural beauty. The project was awarded in 2017 by the Council of Europe, under the program "Good Practices of the Municipalities of Greece".

<https://climbinleonidio.com/wp/>

### ALTERNATIVE TOURISM

The development of alternative tourism contributes to improving living standards by creating the necessary mild tourist infrastructure which is in harmony with the natural environment. In addition, alternative tourism is a source of revenue for the local economy. The main positive economic effects are related to tourist expenditure, export and import of related goods and the operation of tourist businesses. Direct financial benefit comes also for businessmen maintaining shops and for people in the tourism industry (food and beverage, hotels, camping, etc.).

The project as a public sector project fits well the local LEADER program and objectives: Enhancing entrepreneurship, Networking and quality, Improvement - Diversification of the tourism product, improving the quality of life of the rural population, Emphasis on the identity and local characteristics of the villages.

The project contributed to the elongation of the touristic season. It stimulated entrepreneurship and, in this way, created more jobs and reduced internal migration.



## “NISSON PERIPLOUS” LAGS NETWORK OF INSULAR GREECE

TOTAL BUDGET: € 800.000

*LEADER helped in making the insular identity more visible, focussing on common challenges and working on common solutions in sectors such as creative culture industries, experiential tourism and local products.*

NISSON PERIPLOUS in Greek literally means “travelling around islands by sea”. However, for all of us, it actually incorporates the rare and very rewarding experience of seeing, tasting, learning and feeling the true essence of insular Greece, a unique identity and culture.

Culture-based economy is a new and growing sector, an autonomous productive force and an important tool for innovation, creativity, quality, sustainability and social cohesion. Networking and cooperation of every possible stakeholder is the ticket for transforming culture to a key development tool.

Some of the actions that were implemented during the years are:

- Networking of insular cultural institutions in Anogeia-Crete,
- Photography workshops and networking in Rodos,
- Creative writing workshops in Literature,
- Poetry and storytelling in Syros, Publication of a children book with insular stories and presentation in local schools in Lasithi,
- Numerous publications and studies on of insular cultural values and local resources.

In the words of our Nobel Prize Laureate, Poet Odysseas Elytis “...the sea can never be wrong...”.



### “Synergy is the most transforming force...”

The project became the essence of the LEADER philosophy and a concentrated Local Development Strategy that unites all the islands of Greece. More than 500 artists from the Greek islands made culture the epicentre of local development in the past years. A vibrant community with ideas and innovative approaches arises and make us all proud and optimistic for the future. Energising this social capital is having a solid and direct impact on the inhabitants' quality of life and it generates constantly added value to the societal and environmental resources of the Greek Islands making them stronger to face challenges and the communities more visible.

## CREATION - MODERNIZATION & EXPANSION OF THE SME DAIRY FACTORY “KEFIR - YGEIA”

TOTAL BUDGET: € 340.946

*A traditional method of processing milk with specific enzyme strains was retrofitted in modern production techniques, and successfully promoted a traditional beverage into the modern era.*

The project action was the creation of an up to date customised production facility, located near Thessaloniki, Greece, aiming to put in production a traditional home-made beverage deriving from the process of milk with a specific enzyme strain called “Kefir”. The product under the name “Kefir” was successfully promoted to the local market through a selected chain of retail sale points. It was initiated at the period 2007-2013 and completed during 2014-2020.

The actions funded by LEADER upgraded the plants building facilities, in order to minimise the environmental impacts of the dairy plant function, to enlarge the array of products and to facilitate logistics management as well as marketing activities.

The products are made using locally produced cow and sheep milk, which is processed with the use of special enzyme strain cultivation in the form of “Kefir” granules. The area at “Drymos” settlement where the small family enterprise was founded has a strong rural character based on agriculture and livestock breeding. The idea to use a century’s old culture process of milk in order to diversify the production chain, offers not only better incomes for farmers and the small dairy enterprises but also provides “new” products to the consumers of the nearby metropolis.



The project displays an array of entrepreneurship characteristics that makes it a distinguishable effort. Those characteristics are:

- The project idea was elaborated within the cell of a family and is implemented as a very small family business.
- It utilised a traditional home-made beverage that has references to centuries old cooking culture and made a “smart” retrofit with modern and up to date quality control methodology in dairy products production.
- The producer made a carefully designed plan to further diversify the original beverage by utilising modern and well supported additives.
- The producer developed a local retail sales network for the produced based on door to door approach by the entrepreneur that is based on relations of personal trust.
- The SME proceeded in further use of available EU funds in order to stay competitive in the local market.



## “LEADER/CLLD INSIGHTS”

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### **ANASTASIOS M. PERIMENIS**

Manager of the Lesvos Local Development Company S.A. - ETAL S.A (LAG/FLAG)

### **ANASTASIA GAVOU**

Officer, Olympia Development Agency, ANOL S.A. (LAG/FLAG)

### **ANATOLI SIAMIDOU**

Officer, Thessaloniki Development Agency, ANETH S.A. (LAG/FLAG)

Especially in Greece, LEADER has had deep impact on social capital and has become a channel and beacon of how the micro-areas can involve various stakeholders, create bonds and trust, build consensus on important issues about policies, utilise efficiently resources and make the areas more visible.

Even though there has been criticism on the heavy administrative burden, we believe that the assets prevail: LAGs have a strong and positive influence on the local key players in Greece and have become a tool of consensus in our rural areas for creating great impact and for untangling various development challenges. LAGs can work as innovation brokers and can add value on LEADER/CLLD through synergies with other tools like ITI, ETC, Smart Villages.

The multi-fund era introduced LEADER to a wide range of new stakeholders, it is an opportunity to seed LEADER again with new ideas, but it also possesses the threat of complexity, an issue that the National and European authorities should consider carefully. There is quite some debate between two main groups of interest, the organisational and administrative vs the local community and stakeholders. The LAG's long experience in implementing various European funds can help answering the important question: how to make the processes simpler, more efficient and beneficiary oriented.

It becomes more and more apparent that LEADER is not, rather should not be considered as a mainstream, conventional method for local development. It should be allowed degrees of freedom, with accountability whereby the local communities take ownership and provide solutions for their problems. Trust is a key word that LEADER creates locally, the ability to handle the great challenges we face - easily measured or not. This is what we see as the added value of LEADER in our areas.



LEADERs Developing Local Communities, European Parliament, Brussels | April 2019



Seminar CLLD and ELARD Future, Laulasmaa, Estonia | November 2017

The Hungarian National Rural Network (HNRN) was created at national level in the framework of the Rural Development Regulation. It is an umbrella network of private and public networks - government, local government, civil society, business organizations, professional bodies (such as Agricultural and Rural Development Advisory Networks) and other organizations involved in the rural development.

The primary goal of the HNRN is to support the implementation and evaluation of the Hungarian Rural Development Programme and to bring together a variety of rural stakeholders. It ensures a good level of communication both at regional, national and international level.

The network delivers regular newsletters and invitations for rural trainings and professional conferences from the network managements, thereby reaching as many rural stakeholders as possible through network registration. Registration for membership is open to anyone involved or interested in agriculture and rural development. There are no membership fees and no obligations that arise from registration.

One of the key roles of HNRN in LEADER program is:

- To develop and enhance channels of communication through information activities;
- Exchange of experiences and methodology to stimulate dialogue and improve the overall performance and success of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) at the local, regional, national, and international levels;
- The dissemination of best practices, the provision of trainings for rural actors, the organisation of studies and conferences, the support for inter-territorial and transnational cooperation and the provision of information development opportunities.



## ALLIANCE OF LEADER ASSOCIATIONS

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The Alliance of Hungarian LEADER Associations is a non-profit organization that aims to:

- promote, through its professional, organizational and advocacy work, the development of grassroots rural development, in particular the LEADER approach, and the organization of rural local communities, in accordance with the principles of social, economic and environmental sustainability;
- pool and share expertise and experience with LEADER LAGs;
- collect and disseminate experience (in particular good practices);
- cooperate with all levels of organizations dealing with rural development, initiating and expressing an opinion on legislation in the field of rural development;
- cooperate with national and municipal bodies in the process of spatial development and spatial planning tasks,
- provide educational activities, events, professional consultancy related to the above purposes.

## OPEN FARMS IN ZALASZENTGRÓT



HUNGARY

*We want to provide local people and tourists with high quality handmade local products and services.*

In 2008 the Zala Thermal Valley Association was established to carry out the rural development tasks of Zalaszentgrót: the municipality is located in a peripheral region of Zala County, in a region with small settlements, decreasing population and low number of local jobs. But it has found its economic strength in cooperation: in 2018 local inhabitants entered into a partnership and established an Open Farm Short Food Chain Group. The main goal is providing high quality handmade local products with a focus on special services to local people, tourists and visitors.

The Open Farm Short Food Chain Group was established by Zala Valley LAG. At least 16 “Open farms” offer seasonal vegetable and fruits, various wine, honey products, special herbs, handmade soap and pastries. “Open farms” also offer various services: animal therapy, traditional Hungarian foods, stylish accommodation and it provides a unique insight into Hungarian farm life. The “Open farm” in Zala Valley Ports can be visited on open days which are announced via the website and through a mobile application.

<http://nyitottportak.hu/>





## ASSOCIATION FOR THE LIVING BALATON HIGHLANDS

*There are more and more colorful entrepreneurs in the Balaton Uplands.*

The Association for the Living Balaton Highlands was established in 2008 in cooperation with local governments, NGOs, entrepreneurs and local residents. Our main goal is to map and preserve local values, to convey the intellectual heritage and message of the Balaton Uplands to the public.

In 2013-2014, we jointly developed the “Quality of the Rural - Living Balaton Highlands” trademark system. The aim of the program is to brand products, services and local values, to identify them with a logo, which stands for quality and regional identification and in helping to get products to market and to promote, appreciate and attract local producers. There are more and more colorful entrepreneurs in the Balaton Uplands, including hotel industry, artisanry, winery as well as fruit and vegetable production joining the trademark system.

In the recent years, we also created GPS hiking trails and city walks in all 59 settlements (a total of 180 hiking trails), presenting local settlement values and attractions. A main goal of the project was to motivate the local population to share their valuable places in the region and include them in the routes.

To sum up, the strength of our region is co-operation and the will to learn from each other.



## IRISH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

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The Irish Local Development Network is functioning well. All 35 members are involved and there is an active, revitalized committee in place, dealing with current issues, future planning, engaging with the Smart Village concept, helping promote the programme. We have formulated a comprehensive response to ENRD's proposals on Smart Villages, advocating for the benefits of the LEADER/CLLD approach.

There are significant challenges with increased bureaucracy and delays, as well as with the fragmentation of rural funding nationwide which is causing a diminution in the reputation of LEADER.

LEADER/CLLD principles have long been embedded in the work of the member Local Development Companies which distinguishes them from other actors – there is a challenge to get the programme to be seen as a developmental programme not a grant-giving one.

Our wish for the next programme is less bureaucracy, less fragmentation, more focus on area-planning and animation, more emphasis on rural development.



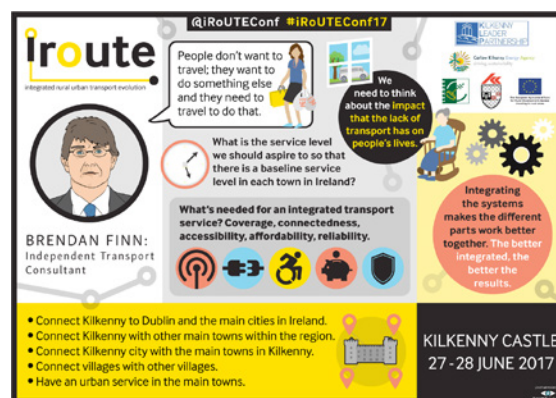
## IRoute (INTEGRATED RURAL URBAN TRANSPORT EVOLUTION) CONFERENCE

*iRoUTE is an open and two-communication platform where the integration in transport provision for Kilkenny County can be explored - LEADER funding brings sectoral actors together in a productive, creative process.*

Held in June 2017, LEADER funding supported the interactive and proactive iRoUTE conference. Stakeholders from transport providers, regulators, international experts, practitioners, academics and community interest groups from throughout Ireland came together to reflect on good practice towards developing an integrated public transport system, focusing particularly on rural areas. The iRoUTE conference provided a key driver leading to the development of a Comprehensive Mobility Plan for the Kilkenny region. To progress the integrated transport initiative, the Kilkenny iRoUTE stakeholders met and developed a project based on the concept of **'universal basic mobility'** used in Belgium and elsewhere in the EU. A number of actions emerged from this study and focused around five key areas: structures and strategic planning; representation, communication and advocacy; funding and finance; provision, integration and connectivity; and modal shift.

The iRoUTE conference publicly brought Kilkenny LEADER Partnership in contact with a Scottish LAG with similar transport concerns. This in turn has led to a trans-national LEADER cooperation project with Cairngorms LAG on the development of an integrated transport system in their respective regions and the promoter is also now exploring the possibility of developing a LEADER cooperation project focusing on a public bike scheme for Kilkenny. T.

For more information read the full case study on iRoUTE: <https://iroute.cklp.ie/>



### UNIVERSAL BASIC MOBILITY

Universal Basic Mobility can be a system of partnerships and/or policies that provide a minimum level of mobility to all members of society.

The spatial profile of rural Ireland and the ongoing trend towards urbanisation makes this topic a central one for rural communities. The project takes a new look at possibilities based on people's real-life interests and needs and it promotes an approach with people at its centre.

This project was supported as part of the LEADER Programme 2014-2020 under Theme 2 'Social Inclusion' and Sub Theme 'Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Communities'. The LAG and Implementing Partner is Kilkenny LEADER Partnership.

## CULLOHILL COMMUNITY PLAN

TOTAL BUDGET: € 16.000

*Using community-led planning to map the steps for building future community sustainability.*

This project developed a five-year Community Plan to support the sustainable development of Cullohill village in county Laois. Through a community-led planning process, it worked to establish a shared vision for the village. Challenges and opportunities were identified, alongside short- and long-term actions to support development. An external consultant with strong experience in community development was appointed to work with the community to develop the plan. The community engaged strongly with the planning process which also activated wider community-led development projects. Even before completion a number of strong outcomes had begun to emerge. A community development committee was established to coordinate positive development for the area. The committee coordinated a fundraising drive accumulating a community fund. Another interesting initiative has been the development of the Folly Music, Comedy and Culture Festival to raise funds for community projects, which took place in the grounds of the majestic 14th century Cullohill Castle.

The project is expected to have significant benefits into the future. It puts in place the building blocks to create a more resilient and enterprising community with greater potential for local job creation. The Community Development Plan will steer future development focusing on enhancing Cullohill as a place to live, work and visit.

This project was supported as part of the LEADER Programme 2014-2020 under Theme 2 'Social Inclusion' and Sub Theme 'Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Communities'. The LAG is Laois LCDC and Implementing Partner Laois Partnership Company.



## “LEADER/CLLD INSIGHTS”

**CLLD – An opportunity to access Rural Development, Fisheries, Social and Structural Funds through a single source, under one set of rules and with one set of reporting systems.**

CLLD has not been officially adopted in Ireland. There is plenty of reference by Irish Government Departments to CLLD within various public funding streams, however, these are still being managed separately.

CLLD should soon be under consideration again. At the coalface of ‘community engagement’ some of Europe’s most creative not-for-profit organisations deliver a complex range of supports to address local needs. These ‘Local Development Companies (LDC’s)’ are under pressure. There are increasingly bureaucratic approaches by the state to the management of public funds, especially EU Funding earmarked for local development.

Local Development Companies continuously submit proposals for once-off or multi-annual funding programmes. Sometimes they succeed, many times they do not succeed. When successful, they fund the direct provision of services (such as employment services for the unemployed) or access ‘grant funding’ for local projects (e.g. the LEADER Programme). This approach represents a bottom-up version of CLLD.

Local Development Companies provide the perfect platform for the Irish Government to deliver CLLD and by doing so would enable these companies to focus on delivery rather than applications (for funding). CLLD could remove much of the increasing bureaucracy that has impacted negatively on the LEADER Programme in particular.

The ‘Climate Change’ agenda and addressing the interconnected multi-layered challenges and issues therein will also promote further the need for the adoption of a CLLD approach. This will enable a top-down policy approach that promotes collaborative local, bottom-up, multi-sectoral action – the essence of LEADER and CLLD.

Finally, the impact of Brexit, if it is to happen or not, must bring a fundamental review of how the EU connects with its communities. The traditional ways of managing public resources must be questioned and must evolve if the institutions are to once again thrive.



**RYAN HOWARD**

A rural farm boy with 25 years’ experience managing a Local Development Company on South Coast of Ireland, SECAD Partnership – SECAD manages a range of publicly funded programmes (Social Inclusion, Work Placement, Rural Development/ LEADER) and lead privately funded initiatives including award winning biodiversity initiatives

- A strong believer of the EU, ‘collaboration’ and the devolution of ‘real’ decision making to local communities in the allocation of resources for the betterment of their areas, socially-economically and environmentally

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LEADER Network Basilicata (LNB) was established in 2018 with the aim to become a regional network first, and then a national one. Indeed, most LAGs in the Basilicata region are new entities gaining their first LEADER experiences. Therefore, our main goal is to provide them with new national and international connections. We also want to keep them informed about the evolution of the European and National regulatory scenario and support them with training activities, seminars, open events and technical assistance. LNB is a start-up network and it will be fully operational in early 2020. The second step will be the upgrading of the network at national level. Multi fund approach is not available in our region.

## CINETURISMO EXPERIENCE +

TOTAL BUDGET: € 300.000

*Cinema can remove the fears associated with an unknown place and instil a sense of familiarity. Therefore, it undoubtedly shows potential in terms of territorial promotion.*

The Basilicata region is a rural region surrounded by two seas (Ionian and Tyrrhenian), offering extremely interesting and different traditions and cultures, in which agriculture plays a key role. The territory became a very important film location with a positive impact on tourism. More than 70 films have been shot in Basilicata in the last decades directed by some of the most important Italian and foreign directors (Taviani, Rosi, Rossellini, Pasolini, Gibson). The cinematic success of the region is determined by its landscapes and the morphology of the territory, capable of satisfying the different stylistic needs of film productions. Undoubtedly, Mel Gibson's production of "The Passion" shot in Matera in 2003 was a turning point for reflection and greater awareness of the economic/tourist potential of cinema.

The Regional LAG decided to boost this process with the aim of creating opportunities for development, social inclusion and employment. Together with local stakeholders the LAG enhanced some of the most interesting film-tourist itineraries and designed a local tourist offer system. Thanks to the project, the film festival "Le Giornate del Cinema Lucano" was organized in Basilicata in 2019, attended by very famous film directors, producers and actors (such as Richard Gere, Paolo Sorrentino and many other top Italian artists).

The initiative represents a pilot experience that will be completed in 2020. Events and seminars will be carried out in Rome and other important Italian cities, also with the support of the Italian Rural Network.

A complex project like this one couldn't be funded under any other programme. This is the LEADER added value. The project addresses both cultural and social issues and could be transferred for example through **living labs** – permanent workshops with local stakeholders to exchange information, co-develop actions, ideas and strategies.

### THE LIVING LAB

The Living Lab is a permanent workshop with the local stakeholders. The main goal is to exchange information, co-develop actions, ideas and strategies.



## “LEADER/CLLD INSIGHTS”



**FRANCESCO FANELLI**

Vice-President and Board Member  
to Agriculture and Forestry

The design of effective territorial development policies requires, today more than ever, a systemic and unitary vision. This approach, however, cannot be applied if the programming tools do not lend themselves to quick and smart integration. The challenge for the next programming period 2021/2027 is to regain programming capacity, by reducing the administrative and technical barriers and by creating the preconditions for the development and implementation of effective and far-reaching policies.



**ROCCO VITTORIO RESTAINO**

RDP 2014/2020 Basilicata Region -  
Managing Authority

Worldwide demographic trends show that inland and peripheral areas tend to become depopulated, to the advantage of large cities. The LEADER approach will have to be developed in the 2021/2027 programming period in order to slow down this phenomenon, through forward-looking investments aimed at facilitating employment, services and opportunities for social inclusion and cohesion.





## LATVIAN RURAL FORUM

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Latvian Rural Forum (LRF) is an umbrella organization uniting more than 80 rural NGOs, including both local community organizations and LAGs. The aim of LRF is to promote the sustainable development of Latvian rural territories by strengthening civil society in rural territories in order to create a place where contented people live, able to meet their economic and social needs in their place of residence.

Last year LRF activities besides the on-going protection of interests and reacting to actual needs, has mainly focused on participating in the planning process for the new period, the national development plan and other policy documents. A major success has been the initiated discussion and work around the inclusion of ERDF in CLLD, as it was not part of CLLD in the period 2014-2020. This has resulted in the creation of a new support program included in CLLD for SMEs financed by ERDF, bringing about three funds for Local development strategies in 2021-2027. We are continuing to align the planned support to existing needs in rural areas, and to include ESF as part of the instruments for implementation of the LDS.

In this planning period LEADER has become more focused on entrepreneurship and the responsibility of the LAGs for decision making increased. Cooperation projects became more popular during the last two years working on innovative technology, ecotourism or the modern use of traditional knowledge amongst others.

We are looking for the balance to find alternative support resources also for civic activities, which has been achieved by becoming part of the Consortium of administration EEA/Norway grants for NGOs in Latvia.

In the last Latvian Rural Community Parliament in June 2019 we gathered more than 50 good practices, presenting new rural paradigms. The conclusions of the discussions are presented to policy makers and will serve as our roadmap for the next two years.

## “SELONIAN ISLANDS” – THEMATIC TOURISM IN SMALL RURAL SETTLEMENTS AS A PROMOTER OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN SELIJA

TOTAL BUDGET: € 81.606

*In the seed of the project, there is the LEADER spirit and value - to listen and to hear what people need and to look for common solutions.*

The Rural Partnership Selija in collaboration with the neighbouring Rural Partnerships of the Aizkraukle Region and the Rural Partnership “Kaimini” of Daugavpils and Ilukste Counties are implementing an inter-territorial cooperation project called “Selonian Islands – thematic tourism in small rural settlements as a promoter of the economic and social development in Selija.”

The goal is to strengthen communities by raising the skills and entrepreneurial mindsets to implement village strategies or other projects, as well as strengthening the community cooperation between the “islands”.

The project activities take place in small rural settlements throughout the territory of Selija, totalling 17 “islands”. Each island is a significant place in the area and the most attractive objects are being highlighted, uniting local activists in the creation of new economic activities and added value to the existing resources. Within the project new tourism objects were created as well as tourism routes.

[http://neretasnovads.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/salu\\_buklets5-ilovepdf-compressed.pdf](http://neretasnovads.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/salu_buklets5-ilovepdf-compressed.pdf)



The project “Selonian Islands” works directly with the local community as a common organism, including all ages, interests and social statuses. Getting all grassroots participants to collaborate, helps to move effectively towards the goals of each unique community, because different opinions and new ideas are being exchanged.

This is the first tourism network in the region, and it shows how to highlight each place’s individual taste.



## RENOVATING AN OLD WINDMILL TO SUPPORT LOCAL ECONOMY

TOTAL BUDGET: € 86.000

*We wanted to respect the original purpose of the building: processing food and generating welfare for the local inhabitants - Inara Misane, project promoter.*

The aim of the project was to both boost agricultural activities and local economic development.

Three habitants of Vilaka County bought an abandoned ancient mill and the surrounding territory. They invested their own money to renovate the mill and decided to apply for EU funding to start economic activities in the mill. Already in the same year the mill became a “business incubator” for Vilaka County. The project promoters use only local products for the catering services at events and the mill serves as a selling point for local producers, especially fruits, vegetables and milk product.



The LEADER programme gave perspectives to locals and encouraged them to take the step to even adopt degraded territories and buildings in order to raise the quality of life for locals and creating jobs in a remote rural area. Through this project they are not only contributing to the economic and social development, but also attracting tourists to this renovated historical and cultural monument. An important aspect is the network that has been created between local food producers – strengthening the local community and creating a place to meet each other.





## APPLYING THE SMART VILLAGE CONCEPT TO SKUJENE, AMATA COUNTY

TOTAL BUDGET: € 9.897

*In the beginning some people were sceptical about promoting the use of technology in the village of Skujene, but in the end it was a success.*

When planning the development of the village of Skujene, it was concluded that there were several prerequisites for building the future development of the village according to the Smart villages concept. The main challenge was the scepticism of stakeholders at the project preparation stage, as the concept of smart villages was still mostly unknown in Latvia. LRF information on the concept of Smart villages was useful to meet the objections.

Within the project they developed IT services, created a space for meetings and promoted inter-generational cooperation, like IT courses provided to elderly people by younger inhabitants. The project also attracts seasonal inhabitants by promoting distance working possibilities.

As a result of the project, demonstrating the possibilities of living in the countryside, including IT solutions and highlighting success stories about how people can successfully develop their business in the countryside, has created a positive image, breaking stereotypes of life in the countryside. The main achievement of the project was the promotion of cooperation in the local community. In less than half a year, the local community applied for the next LEADER project, and organised a number of networking activities.

One of the major challenges in the rural areas is the aging rural society and shrinking population, this project tackles those major challenges by strengthening the existing population through access to LEADER/CLLD. This is represented within the project implementation based on identified local needs, as the preparation process was community led, with local opportunities, as the village has a fibre optic cable going through.





**LIETUVOS  
KAIMO  
BENDRUOMENIŲ  
SAJUNGA**

## NETWORK OF LITHUANIAN LOCAL ACTION GROUPS

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LITHUANIA

The Network of Lithuanian LAGs is cooperating in:

- Committees of project selection: The LAG Network has a voting mandate and can influence the decision makers (MA). In 2018 about 500 project financing agreements were signed with a total amount of about € 11 million. At the beginning of 2019, around 900 local projects were approved with a total amount of € 33 million.
- Working group and coordination group of the LEADER method: Main task in these groups are to discuss problems, drafts legal acts, analyse the projects of legal acts and to solve administrative questions related to the programme of rural development.

2018 has become a cornerstone in the context of the implementation of projects and the uptake of support, as the network of LAGs has been able to agree with the managing authorities on a simplification of the rules. This includes for example a higher support rate from LEADER funding for community and social business projects (from 80% to 95%) and to allow local project applicants to shorten the project monitoring period from 5 to 3 years.

At the beginning of 2019 discussions on the next programming period started. The LAG network with the Ministry of Agriculture is considering the possibility for LAGs to become administrators not only for the LEADER method, but also for other measures of the Rural Development Program, which would not require artificial increase of LAGs.





## RECONSTRUCTION AND PROMOTION OF ACTIVITY OF THE NOCIŪNAI COMMUNITY CENTER

TOTAL BUDGET: € 41.000

*The community developed lots of ideas for the old boiler house, but what really inspired them was to bring up the history of soap.*

The Nociūnai Community Centre was established in 2007, in a former boiler house. The wish of the local people was to convert the boiler house into a cosy and comfortable community home. They developed lots of ideas, but what really inspired the people was to bring up the history of soap. Since the ancient times Nociūnai village has had a tradition of soap making. There is even a legend about amber soap. That's why the community established "Nociūnų muilinyčia" to produce handmade soap called "Gintaras" (amber), which has become a local speciality already. Its colour is obtained only by using natural oils. All herbs that are in soap are grown in the village.

Furthermore, they created an educational program for tourists about the history of soap, telling legends, offering workshops to make handmade soaps and to taste the traditional dish, "herring porridge".

Throughout the process the LAG staff gave moral inspiration and were advocates for the community to realise their dream of having their own community house and developing the community-based business.

<https://lt-lt.facebook.com/nociunu.muilinycia>



This project was chosen because it illustrates the direction of the LEADER program in Lithuania: job creation and the emergence of new opportunities to operate in the countryside.

The project is also a great example of the added value of LEADER in Lithuania: the project created new tourist services and unique products, it rose the rural resident's income and employment, it provided opportunities to represent the local culture and traditions and the popularity of the village increased.



## NEMUNAS DAY CENTER

TOTAL BUDGET: € 40.000

*The LEADER program was the only opportunity for this project, as the community couldn't afford a day care center.*

The Anglininkai community house was established in 2006 and since then started to create better living conditions for the rural inhabitants. In 2019 the community started the project “Nemunas Day Center”. The aim of the project was to create a social business for the Anglininkai community, providing day-to-day social care and education services. The existing premises were adapted as the day care center purchasing furniture, carpets, household and technical equipment.

Also, an eight-seat car was purchased for the needs of a children's day care center and additional shuttle services.

Today, the center has three full time workers and three volunteers.

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This project was the first community social business project in Lithuania in this programming period.





ELARD Presidents, LEADER Conference in Moldova, Chisinau, Moldova | April 2019



ELARD General Assembly Meeting, Brussels | December 2018



## NATIONAL LEADER NETWORK IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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MOLDOVA

The National LEADER Network in the Republic of Moldova was established at the end of 2018 by the LAGs and other LEADER facilitating organizations. The first Moldovan LAGs were launched by the end of 2017. Today, there are 32 LAGs operating in the country, covering 30% of the rural population. The LEADER movement is a bottom-up initiative using limited “seed” funds in Moldova at the moment.

LEADER’s adaptation in Moldova started in 2016, within the Support to Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) Programme, financed by the European Union within the framework of the Eastern Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI). The three-year programme was closed in December 2018, but the LEADER initiative has been extended and continues to work with the involvement of facilitating organizations and with financial contribution from the EU and other donors (individual EU Member States, and even non-EU countries).

For us, LEADER has become a hope to reinvent our rural areas and an opportunity to bring positive change to villages that are struggling with many economic, social and environmental challenges. We work on convincing the local government to start the national LEADER programme, and, at the same time, we continue cooperating with international donor funds.



We understand that LEADER is not only about the local economy, but also about local autonomy and local transparency - valuing local resources and empowering locals are some of our main long-term goals. However, the earlier we start, the sooner we will see the results.

## FACILITATION OF THE PROCESS OF CREATING THE LAG “VALEA CUBOLTEI”

TOTAL BUDGET: € 10.000 (USAID LEADER ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTED BY THE POLISH SOLIDARITY FUND)

*“Everything is ahead, there are perspectives and I’m motivated to do good and useful things. I have great expectations about the LEADER process, hoping that in the future more people will get involved in different actions for our village, but also for the whole LAG territory” - Alina Stratulat, member of the LAG “Valea Cuboltei”, school teacher.*

LAG “Valea Cuboltei” was created following the LEADER methodology adapted in Moldova within the EU-SARD Programme. The methodology assumes approximately a one-year community coaching process to establish local partnerships, to design a Local Development Strategy, and provide one-year community mentoring and technical assistance to newly created LAGs in the first year of their functioning.

Within the EU-SARD Programme, a LEADER implementation guideline was created. The majority of LAGs in Moldova were created based on it, including the implementation of community coaching and mentoring principles. This allowed using LEADER as a process to rediscover development potential and to rebuild trust at the local level.



### “COMMUNITY COACHING” TO IGNITE THE SPIRIT OF CHANGE

The original European LEADER approach is based on seven specific principles, which must all be present simultaneously in order to ensure the method is applied correctly. In the LEADER approach adaptation in Moldova, “community coaching” is an additional eighth principle that makes LEADER/CLLD tools more appropriate for inclusive place-based development in countries and rural areas, where self-confidence and self-organisation in the local community is lacking. Community coaching is designed to mobilise and empower communities.

The impulse to contribute to the “common good” or develop social capital is being lost in many local communities globally, for a variety of historical, economic and social reasons. Community coaching is a development tool that counters this dynamic by encouraging communities and their members to achieve their full potential and build social capital by working together.

## MODERNISATION OF BEEHIVES AT LAG “PLAIUL CODRILOR”

TOTAL BUDGET: € 3.900

*Our aim is to produce high quality honey.*

### A NEW ERA OF CHANGE

LAG “Plaiul Codrilor” received in 2018 20.000 € to implement their Local Development Strategy. The

LAG announced a local call for projects. The project administration is the responsibility of the LAG office, where the choosing was made by the LAG selection committees, composed of representatives of mayoralties, local businesses and civil society.

In Moldova, LAGs provide the first experience to local stakeholders to sit down and make decisions together - to discuss projects, and to evaluate them without a fear to express true opinions. There were strong debates sometimes, but common satisfaction appeared when the decisions were finally taken. A new era of change has started!

Sergiu Agafita is the leader of a small beekeeper community in LAG “Plaiul Codrilor”. He has come up with the idea of modernizing the main elements in local beekeeping. More beekeepers from Dolna, Stejareni, Micleuseni have created a great collective that puts a lot of effort into its work. “There are good visible results. We used to work with classical horizontal hives. But the partial financing from the project has helped our mission to meet the requirements of European standards, we’ve managed to build vertical hives with two splits”, Vasile a member of the collective tells us. Even if those are technical details, the effort put in during these few weeks is seen in those 50 hives given to each beekeeper involved in the project.

“The beehives are already put into work – locals have already seen the project in its process of implementation”, mentions Mr. Porubin.

The common aim is to produce high quality honey in big batches. “Usually, we have acacia and linden honey, but with these modern beehives, we could produce pastoral, sunflower, lavender and rapeseed honey. Of course, we would like to promote our products on the international market”, says Vasile.

In 2018, 11 LAGs in Moldova implemented approx. 160 projects. In 2019, the number of LAGs implementing their local strategy is 25. LAG projects promote local economic, social and environmental development ideas, including organising

local festivals, developing an enterprise for spice and medical plant production, growing strawberries in greenhouses, designing a rural market, equipping playgrounds, establishing a touristic boarding house with national characteristics and opening local restaurants serving traditional food. The main concrete benefit is that the local LAG calls, create development opportunities for those who are usually not winners of competitive macro-economic processes.



## WORKSHOP ON TAILORING AND REPAIRING OUTERWEAR MADE FROM NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL FUR AND LEATHER

TOTAL BUDGET: € 3.000

*I want to develop the business; I know I can do more.*

Until recently, Galina Minceva's tailor shop was her living room. "I worked, and then I had to gather everything, do the Hoovering and prepare the place for dinner or sleeping. Now I get the keys, lock the tailor shop and go home". With the help of a grant, the woman restored two rooms in the old house in the courtyard, bought two modern fur and leather sewing machines, one iron and one steam generator.

Surrounded by sewing machines, the seamstress says she is happy that she can support herself, covering the expenses. "I'm retired, but the old-age pension is not enough for me. Heating is expensive in winter. I like tailoring and it helps me make ends meet" Galina tells.



Sofia Petco lives in the same village as Galina and she is the first seamstress hired at the tailor shop. She had worked for five years at a factory in the Comrat town, but she refused to commute since she has children. She learned to work with the leather and fur at Galina's and says she is lucky she can work in the village, close to her family.

"I became more self-confident. I want to expand my tailor shop. Currently, I have one more trainee, maybe we will hire her. I want to develop the business, I know I can do more", Galina Minceva says with confidence.

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LEADER piloting in Moldova started in the South of the country. The South of Moldova is a multi-cultural region, home of Gagauzians, Bulgarians, Ukrainians, Moldovans, Russians and Roma. LAGs from this region may be described as micro regions with different cultures, history and language.

The process of creation of the LAGs in the South has shown that the LEADER approach has a huge confidence building dimension. Galina Minceva comes from Russia, she lives in a Bulgarian village and she is an active member of LAG "Bugeac Kilim".

## “LEADER/CLLD INSIGHTS”

### LEADER in Moldova – a pilot for a new EU approach-oriented delivery system in partnering countries

#### MARTA MARCZIS

Former European Expert for Rural Development, EU-SARD Programme  
• President of AEIDL

#### MARINA ALBU

President of the National LEADER Network in Moldova

#### TOMASZ HORBOWSKI

Solidarity Fund PL in Moldova, Head of Mission

A pervasive feeling of disappointment towards the state in general and its institutions, but also towards the EU, affects the Moldovan society. The vast majority of Moldovan citizens do not see their future in the country. The statistics show that 94% of young people in Moldova were thinking of or would like to migrate.

In order to regain trust, citizens need to experience that they are the protagonists of policymaking, not just the passive recipients. That is why the EU should create new collaboration frameworks that give possibility to keep a healthy dialogue and provide the necessary support to the citizens. Local development, as a topic for collaboration, represents the most natural, most tangible and nearest circle of belonging, that is why it can become the most relevant space for interaction between the EU and citizens of partnering countries.

Moldovan LEADER/CLLD experience shows that this instrument can be used in the local context to:

- build local capacities based on practical exercises and own experiences in the regions;
- strengthen the local democracy and local transparency: local people take the decisions that immediately transform into concrete actions and interventions in their territory and they start to demand the monitoring and evaluation of the spent funds;
- ensure local autonomy, as long as decisions are taken at the local level without political pressure from the regional or central authorities;
- value and use local resources for local development;
- strengthen the ability of locally-driven development processes and the self-organisation of local actors, representing different sectors: civic, business and public;
- gather together local stakeholders representing different outlooks and backgrounds to collaborate for the development of their territory, (incl. confidence building dimension).

LEADER in Moldova could be seen as a pilot of the new approach-oriented delivery system of the EU assistance and a new framework of cooperation between the EU and citizens in partnering countries. The idea behind LEADER/CLLD was to delegate funding decisions to local communities rather than to national or regional authorities. There is no reason why this tool cannot achieve similar results within development assistance, and in particular European Neighbourhood Instrument. In Moldova it has already started to work.



## LEADER NETWORK NETHERLANDS



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LEADER Network Netherlands (LNN) was initially formed to be able to join ELARD and to support the policy and lobby work of ELARD. It is an informal network supported by the 20 LAGs in The Netherlands. Nowadays members of LNN have joined working groups to work on the national strategic plan to put LEADER in a good position in the new CAP (2021-2027). LNN organises several national meetings and organises the yearly national LEADER day.



## BREWERY HOTEL PARKZICHT IN VEENDAM

TOTAL BUDGET: € 850.000

*LEADER Oost-Groningen supports the development of entrepreneurs in its region to help them grow and to give employment a boost.*

Hotel Parkzicht is a familiar sight in Veendam. It has been the most popular hotel and restaurant in Veendam for years. The owners are planning a thorough renovation of the hotel based on a new concept: a brewery hotel. A brewery with a tasting room will be added to the hotel. Guests will be able to dine among eye-catching hop boilers, which will be placed in the restaurant. The kitchen will also be adapted, to give it a more open character. Such a layout is tried-and-tested and a popular concept in other countries, particularly in the United States. The Netherlands has not quite caught up with this trend. Thanks to this development, East Groningen will gain an intriguing eatery and the hotel with public restaurant will get a contemporary look. This has already led to an increase in employment.

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This project represents the investment in rural areas in order to offer employment to inhabitants of rural areas and to keep these areas liveable.



## THOLEN PHASE FOOTPATH NETWORK

The Zeeland Landscape Management Foundation (Stichting Landschapsbeheer Zeeland) plans to develop a continuous network of footpaths, extending for 150 kilometres, as part of the Tholen Phase 2 Footpath Network (Wandelnetwerk Tholen fase 2) project. New walking routes will be laid out, existing routes – which are often not signposted – will be updated, new connections will be developed and included in the footpath network, suitable plans for detours will be created and routes will be linked to one another. As a result, a network of footpaths will be created covering the entire Tholen area.

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This project is an example of investments in the touristic sector in rural areas, to improve walking structures and combine it with an improvement of the landscape.





Rural development at the heart of EU territorial cohesion, European Week of Regions and Cities, Brussels | October 2019



LEADER Hearing, European Parliament, Brussels | November 2018



## RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

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NORTH MACEDONIA

The Rural Development Network (RDN) of the Republic of North Macedonia was established in March 2010 in Skopje, as a movement organized at national level to provide a voice for rural communities in North Macedonia, currently bringing together 101 Civil Society Organisations and affecting about 1.500 rural leaders.

In the last year RDN has actively worked on its own institutional development and the capacities of the members, developed a new strategy for the period 2019 – 2022, redefined its thematic groups in accordance with the needs of the rural stakeholders and started the organisation of the first national rural parliament.

In the past few years the RDN supported the creation of local development initiatives based on LEADER's bottom-up approach. These initiatives were aimed at building and strengthening the social and human capital in rural areas through consultations, education, training and piloting local rural economic development projects. Between 2014 and 2015, the majority of these groups were formalised into LAGs registered as CSOs under the Law on Associations and Foundations, but not as part of a program managed by the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Water Economy (MAFWE).

The LEADER measure was included in National Rural Development Program and IPARD (Instrument for Pre-accession for Rural Development) funding schemes for 2014–2020. Even though significant progress has been made in developing the necessary regulatory framework, the MAFWE still needs to finalise the EU accreditation process in order to make the LEADER measure operational. In 2018, 13 LAGs were registered in MAFWE and are eligible to receive national funding.



## TOURISTICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE KOKINO ARCHAEO-ASTRONOMICAL SITE

TOTAL BUDGET: € 5.000

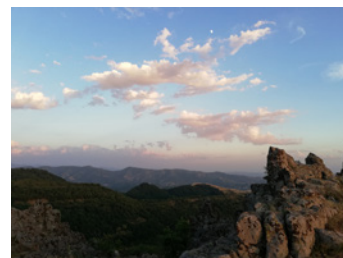
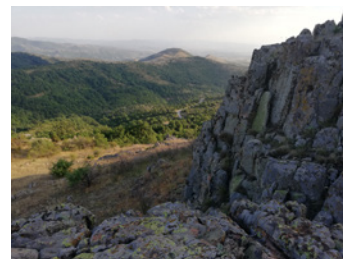
*Kokino is one of the world's oldest observatories dating back to the 19th century BC - nevertheless, the vast possibilities of the site are not sufficiently utilised.*

Kokino is a Bronze Age archaeological site in North Macedonia; it is an astronomical observatory from the megalithic period. Kokino is one of the world's oldest observatories, recognised by NASA and dating back to the 19th century BC. The site includes special stone markers used to track the movement of the sun and moon on the eastern horizon.

Between 10.000 and 30.000 tourists are estimated to visit the Kokino archaeo-astronomical site in the Municipality of Staro Nagorichane every year. Nevertheless, the vast possibilities of the site are not sufficiently utilised for the purpose of rural development: the place does not have the necessary infrastructure to provide easy access for tourists and visitors and is not promoted enough. With the implementation of this project, better conditions for sustainable development of the archaeo-astronomical site were created.

The project is a pilot project implemented by the LEADER-like LAG "Aber", financed by USAID, as the country still hasn't got an accredited LEADER measure. The overall goal of the project was to improve the tourism infrastructure of Kokino and to increase the visibility of the site as a prime tourism destination in North Macedonia, thereby increasing the flow of money from tourism into the region's economy. The project wanted to develop the conditions with the introduction of a visitor-friendly access to the Kokino site and the delivery of professional guided tours by certified tour guides. It also included infrastructural arrangements at the Kokino archaeo-astronomical site, the introduction of advanced promotional tools and a revenue model for achieving sustainable progress and improved tourism offer.

The project was implemented by the LAG initiative composed of representatives of the public, business and civil sector. This promotion of the cultural and natural heritage is a very useful tool for the development of local tourism and could be easily transferred to other LAGs.



### LONG-TERM AIM: DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW REVENUE MODEL

The most important intervention is the new revenue model which will enable the Kumanovo Museum to generate funds for the maintenance and continued development of Kokino. This much needed revenue will enable the museum to independently finance tourism infrastructure projects on the site that have been in limbo for years due to a lack of funding, such as a protective fence around the site, a gift shop and a small gallery of archaeological artefacts. It will also enable the Museum to precisely track the number of visitors coming to Kokino, something that is currently not possible.



## POLISH NETWORK OF LOCAL ACTION GROUPS - FEDERATION OF REGIONAL NETWORKS OF LAGS

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POLAND

The Polish Network of LAGs was set up in 2012. It is a union of formal and informal regional networks of LAGs throughout the country. These regional networks cover about 260 LAGs (80% of all Polish LAGs).

The objective of the Polish Network is the development of a platform for cooperation and exchange of experiences between LAGs and their regional networks, as well as other organizations and persons connected with implementation of the LEADER/CLLD approach. Moreover, the Polish Network intends to actively participate in the development of policies towards the countryside and rural areas – both on the national and European level. In a broader perspective, the national network supports activities aimed at the development of the social capital, the improvement of the quality of life and economic diversification, as well as professional integration and reintegration of inhabitants of rural areas, who are in danger of exclusion.





## ASSISTING IN THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ENTERPRISES PROCESSING TRADITIONAL SPECIALITIES

TOTAL BUDGET: € 5.000-50.000

*The consumption of traditional and organic food in Poland grows. Many farmers created and developed their businesses through the LEADER programme.*

There are very small farms (average 2.6 hectares) in the area of the LAG Valley Raby in the South of Poland. The incomes from such small farms are quite low. But some people increase their income through the processing of their products, as the consumption of traditional and organic food in Poland grows. Many farmers created and developed their businesses through the LEADER programme in the years 2007-2013 and in the current period 2014-2020. Such an entrepreneur is Grzegorz Mucha from the company “Kamionna”, which produces organic juices and compotes. Mr. Mucha has already benefited three times from the LEADER programme’s resources in both periods. Each time he has bought additional equipment for his factory. Another entrepreneur is Alicja Sławęta (“Aled”), who produces pork sausages from pigs grown on her own farm and from the surrounding farmers. Mrs. Sławęta started her business with the LEADER support from the previous period. Another company in the area of the LAG that benefitted from the LEADER funding is Mrs. Maria Zdebska who produces traditional dumplings, croquettes and stuffed cabbage.

50% of the LEADER budget in Poland is dedicated to job creation, which entails supporting the creation and development of enterprises. The promotion of traditional food is also a common activity supported by the LEADER programme. Mostly rural housewives apply for such project funding. Usually they sell their products on stands during cultural and recreational events, competitions and through publications.



## BUILDING THE CWINT ASTRONOMIC OBSERVATORY WITH REVOLVING DOME IN PARZYNÓW

TOTAL BUDGET: € 25.000

*We want to establish an entirely new educational and research facility as well as a new tourism and cultural Focus in the territory.*

The project consists of the construction of an astronomic observatory equipped with a revolving dome. The project's principal aim is to establish an entirely new educational and research facility as well as a new tourism and cultural focus in the territory of the LAG Ostrzeszów. The project is of considerable networking value. The CWINT Association – a grass-root originator and implementer of the project – especially wanted to broaden the knowledge of children and young people in establishing cooperation with schools and scout organisations as well as with educational and research institutions in Poland and Europe. The project's benefits are mainly social and environmental. The improvement of the CWINT Association's infrastructure has allowed them to develop new activities.

The construction of such an infrastructure project isn't typical for LEADER in Poland, even though tourism plays a major role in the work of most Polish LAGs. Promoters of tourism projects are mainly public sector entities, while in this case it's an NGO. Also due to its innovative character combining tourism with the goal to educate young people and encourage them for science activities we wanted to present this LEADER project.





## “LEADER/CLLD INSIGHTS”

There are 324 LAGs in Poland, which represent 10% of all European LAGs. The total budget for LEADER/CLLD is 5.4% of the total amount (EAFRD and national) of the RDP. All four European Funds (EAFRD, EMFF, ERDF and ESF) are available in two regions out of 16: Kujawsko-Pomorskie and Podlaskie. LAGs in these regions have a 2,5 times bigger budget than LAGs in the rest of Poland. 96% of the rural territory is covered by LAGs.

Poland is the only big country in EU with one national LEADER programme, which entails the involvement of a lot of public authorities and a respective high administrative burden. A negative fact is the long time for approval of project applications and a high percentage of rejections (average 33% getting near 48% in some regions).

Poland uses Simplified Cost Options (SCO) in LEADER/CLLD with good experiences. There were lump sums for the preparatory support and for the running costs and animation of LAGs, as well as for individuals who want to set up a new business. Still, we need lump sums for all beneficiaries, especially for small and typical projects.

One of the main challenges for the future of LEADER/CLLD is to have the CLLD approach in the whole country. In my opinion other important actions will be: cohesion of different funds, simplification of procedures, capacity building of authorities and LAGs to implement CLLD, increasing LAGs' independence and keeping LEADER/CLLD in accordance with the changing living and working environment in rural areas (social cohesion, migration, regional clusters, green economy, climate change, smart solutions, technology, etc.).



### KRZYSZTOF KWATERA

Trainer of LEADER Programme and for Fisheries LAGs since 2004  
• Representative of Polish LAGs in the General Assembly and the LEADER/CLLD Subgroup of the European Network for Rural Development 2014-2020 • Member of the Monitoring Committee of the Rural Development Programme in Poland 2014-2020 • Member of the Working Group of the National Rural Network of 2007-2013 and of 2014-2020

## MINHA TERRA - PORTUGUESE NETWORK OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATIONS

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Minha Terra was founded in 2000. It speaks on behalf of all (i.e. 60) Portuguese Rural LAGs and advocates to address their needs for capacity building, training, technical assistance, networking, cooperation, communication, lobbying and policy making.

Year after year, the network has carved its path, gaining recognition with national authorities and becoming a member of many consultative organisations related to regional development and agriculture, due to its knowledge of the situation in rural areas of Portugal (more than 90 per cent of the Portuguese territory is covered by LAGs).

The LEADER/CLLD implementation, the multi-funding approach and the high administrative burden kept Minha Terra quite busy over the last programming period.

Given that Portugal hasn't yet had a real multi-fund approach, because each measure in LAGs' LDSs was funded by a single fund, as well as each project has to be submitted to a mono-fund call for projects, it was with a view to preparing for the future of CLLD, and based on the experience of LAGs, that Minha Terra decided to design a document of recommendations supported and signed

by over 1500 organizations – local authorities, business, civil society organizations – such as farmer, business or cultural associations, etc. On July 12th, the Local Development Pact 2030 was published and succeeded in obtaining the commitment that the Portuguese Government will work together with Minha Terra and the LAGs in order to prepare solutions to problems identified in past experiences.



## PROVE - PROMOVER E VENDER [PROMOTING AND SELLING]

In Portugal a large number of small farmers, scattered over the territory, were experiencing difficulties in establishing market-oriented organisations, repelled by constraining rules and regulations, and ignored by a small group of wholesalers concentrating on supply and sales, came to the attention of local development actors. Many of these farmers, located in peri-urban areas, also experienced real state pressure.

In view of the economic and social exclusion of small producers, often followed by land abandonment and a drop in the number of farms, LAGs decided to put a halt to this evolution with innovative measures for the regeneration of rural areas, valuing local agents and resources. Through measures supporting the access to the market and the organization of producers in short food supply chains, the farm products gained a new market, farmers were socially acknowledged and consumers feel safe and involved.

The Project PROVE - Promoting and Selling is a direct sale experience of fruit and vegetables baskets, that has given rise to and supported the emergence of, a network of small producers organized in groups, the gathering of consumers around the promotion and the commercialisation of farming products. It was launched in the peri-urban area of Lisbon in 2004/2006 by ADREPES LAG, and replicated by two other LAGs (MONTE ACE in Alentejo and ADER-SOUSA in the North Region) in the framework of the EQUAL Community Initiative, supported by the ESF.

In 2010, the Rural Development Programme (2007-2013) took it over and extended it to 16 LAG areas. What turned out to be a LEADER cooperation project aims to promote new forms of short food supply chains between small producers and consumers, thereby helping producers sell their produce, directly and immediately for a fair price to consumers who buy quality products and have direct contact with producers.

Considering that in the very beginning, in 2006, PROVE started with 5 producers and 2 groups of consumers, and that today it has around 137 producers, organized in 97 groups, 4.015 weekly average consumers and an annual turnover over € 3.250.000, it is legitimate to say that it is an excellent initiative.



<http://www.prove.com.pt/www/english.T9.php>

## REVITALIZATION OF THE LOCAL PRODUCERS MARKET

**TOTAL ELIGIBLE COSTS: € 155.710**



The northern municipality of Chaves obtained support through the LAG ADRAT the revitalization of the local producers market, well regarded as an active centre for short food supply chains, stimulating the local economy and facilitating the social interaction between rural and urban communities. Its scope of influence covers the whole region of Alto Tâmega as well as the Spanish municipality of Verín, covering over 120.000 potential customers. Installed in a building attached to the local market, the Local Producers Market is hosting local producers - farmers, cattle breeders, agro-food and craftsmen -, since June 2019. A revitalized local market will therefore help to improve the value of local products, and the economy of rural areas, benefitting directly the local producers and reducing the number of intermediaries and distances between production and consumption.

## BIOBERÇO DA LUSITÂNIA

**TOTAL ELIGIBLE COSTS: € 145.731**



Having promoted organic farming and local farmer markets for more than 7 years, LAG PINHAL MAIOR decided to go further and gather five neighbouring municipalities in their area (Mação, Proença-a-Nova, Oleiros, Sertã e Vila de Rei) around a partnership initiative. This project collects, directly or indirectly, farming products, from over 200 farmers, who get a fair payment for their production. These farmers were previously trained in organic farming. On leaving the farm, the products will be conveyed to a central hall, where they are washed, sized, packed, labelled and dispatched to retail dealers who guarantee that the certified products are sold through supermarkets. This project essentially aims to stimulate and qualify the producers, mostly family farmers, in organic production methods and in doing so, give them a chance to sell their certified produce.

More than an initiative, PROVE turned out to be a study case and then the foundation for a policy measure. During the PROVE project implementation, Minha Terra commissioned a research from three universities to provide a set of recommendations for the design of policy measures to support short food supply chains with the intention to integrate them in the next Rural Development Plan (2014-2020). This study and the raised awareness on the importance of short supply chains and local food systems, promoted the creation of a policy measure under LEADER 2014-2020 to support Agri-food short chains and local markets.

This initiative inspired, among other things, two recently approved LEADER/ CLLD projects, supported by the Portuguese Rural Development Programme 2014-2020: Revitalization of the Local Producers Market in Chaves and Bioberço da Lusitânia.



## “LEADER/CLLD INSIGHTS”

Experience over the past twenty-eight years implementing the LEADER approach has shown that LAGs have the know-how and capabilities to act autonomously fostering solutions that address the challenges of their areas and communities. It has been possible to support many small projects, strengthen local dynamics and promote the competitiveness of territories in sectors as diverse as tourism, local products, environment, the creation and development of small businesses, proximity services, attracting new visitors to the territories, promoting traditions and heritage and boosting local economies.

Thanks to the success and results of the implementation of the LEADER approach in the 2007-2013 period, the European Commission has extended the approach to the EMFF by introducing Axis 4 and in the 2014-2020 programming period created the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) instrument under the Common Provisions Regulation to the European Structural and Investment Funds (EAFRD, EMFF, ERDF and ESF).

The transition from the LEADER Approach to the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) has triggered changes that undermine the efficiency and effectiveness of the instrument, preventing adequate response to the needs identified by communities in their Local Development Strategies, and questioning the image and proximity work carried out in recent years by LAGs.

CLLD, in its extended version to the different funds, has proved to be an instrument with a complex governance model, with inflexible regulation unattractive to local actors, with different interpretations of the instrument, managed by different managing authorities and with negative implications for the implementation of Local Development Strategies and consequently for the empowerment of communities and the development and cohesion of territories.



*Extract of the Pact for the Local Development 2030, proposed by Minha Terra in July 2019 and signed by more than 1500 organizations in Portugal*



## NATIONAL FEDERATION OF LAGS IN ROMANIA

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The Romanian Network FNGAL is an umbrella organization founded in 2012 that supports the operation and development of LAGs in Romania and represents their interests in order to enhance the implementation of CLLD in Romania. 185 out of 235 Romanian LAGs are part of the Federation.

LEADER in Romania is a success: 39 LAGs were newly established in the 2014-2020 programming period, already 5.000 projects were supported. LEADER plays an important role in addressing groups that typically do not have easy access to financing – farmers of small and medium sized farms, young or disadvantaged people, etc.

For the future FNGAL wants to foster cooperation projects between LAGs. Thematic priorities of its work will be associative forms of agriculture – in particular cooperatives and producer groups – and the support of social infrastructure projects. Given the very positive impact of LEADER, FNGAL requests that 15 % of the EAFRD budget should be allocated to LEADER in the next programming period. At the moment the amount is 7 %.



Making rural areas the engines of a sustainable Europe, European Economic and Social Committee, Brussels | March 2019



LEADER Reloaded Conference, Évora, Portugal | September 2018



## NATIONAL LEADER NETWORK

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<https://www.facebook.com/pg/nlnserbia/about/>



SERBIA

National LEADER Network (NLN) is Serbia's largest non-profit network of rural "change makers". It contributes to the growth of rural organisations or LAG initiatives, facilitates access to funds for rural people, essential to finance, jobs and quality services, it speaks out in support of policies that provide structures and regulations needed for IPARD and other rural development support instruments.

The main focus of NLN is to foster education, financial stability and healthy environment, concurring to a strong rural community.

NLN facilitates collaborations of Fellow LAGs, promoting the exchange of valuable knowledge and insights, and leaving them better equipped to advance their work.

The organisation searches for rural leaders, social innovators and entrepreneurs, and at the launch stage, provides them - Fellow LAGs - full Venture support for an average of three years, allowing them to focus full-time on building their institutions and spreading their ideas. It also provides its Fellows with a national and EU level support network of their peers and partnerships with professional consultants.





## NATIONAL NETWORK OF LAGS OF SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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SLOVAKIA

The National Network of LAGs of Slovak Republic was created in 2012 as a Civic Association that represents its members in communication with institutions, promoting LEADER / CLLD approach and LAGs needs, insights and expectations. We organise events to share information and knowledge and build bridges between rural stakeholders. The Network has now 51 members (46% of all Slovak LAGs) and we continuing to grow.

Slovak Republic started to implement the LEADER approach in 2007 without any previous experience. 29 LAGs covering a population of 735 000 inhabitants of the Slovak countryside (14% of the Slovak population) implemented more than 3000 projects in their areas and 55 cooperation projects in the 2007-14 period. This period was really fruitful: LAGs strengthened their position in the territories, enhanced further cooperation and brought the LEADER approach into practise.

The 2014-20 period brought an increase in the rural areas – 110 LAGs were selected with more than 2.5 million inhabitants (46% of the Slovak population), but with a much smaller budget than in the previous period. The current period is unfortunately unsuccessful for the Slovak Republic in achieving such good outcomes as in the previous period. Slovakia decided to implement the CLLD approach using multi-funding – it uses EAFRD for implementing strategies and for animation activities of LAGs and ERDF for running costs and also for implementing strategies. The multi-funding system was not well developed and so now LAGs are not able to implement their strategies. With the experiences from this period our main challenge for the upcoming period is to design with the Managing Authorities a functional implementation system and to improve the LAGs position in rural areas as well as the LEADER/ CLLD approach in rural development.

## SUPPORT OF REGIONAL PRODUCTS FROM KOPANICE AND ZÁHORIE

TOTAL BUDGET: € 65.000

*The trademarks did not only boost the local economy but also the promotion of the whole region.*

Kopanice and Záhorie are two neighbouring regions with the typical geomorphology of the Outer Western Carpathians. This landscape created the scattered settlements very specific to this region.

This geomorphology influenced the settlement development (dispersed settlements), an agricultural focus on orchards and fruit products (typical plumb spirit Slivovitz, plum jams and other fruit products), culture and society. Záhorie for example with its typical hard accent is the origin of a lot of jokes known by all Slovaks.

LAGs are the leaders of rural development in these regions and so they have decided to cooperate on a joint project - to introduce a regional trademark. Common cooperation led to the creation of the Kopanice trademark (LAG Podhoran and LAG Kopaničiarsky region) and Záhorie trademark (LAG Horné Záhorie). The Záhorie trademark was already created as part of the pilot project “Green Belt” (2006-2008). So, this project built on it and revived the initial Zahorie trademark. The project further addressed the creation of the Kopanice trademark. It is intended especially for local producers, craftsmen, crop growers typical for these regions as well as for service providers and promoters of cultural heritage. The secondary positive impact of the project was the development of social and know-how which accompanied the creation of the trademarks.



Regional Trademarks are a very important topic for the promotion of local entrepreneurs and regions in Slovakia. The LAGs showed that they have the best expertise and capacities for developing them (we have around 13 trademarks in Slovakia). This project shows their viability and their continuous development. Kopanice trademark has now 17 holders from Folk Traditions and Crafts to regional specialities selling the products in their own shop. Záhorie trademark has around 21 certified holders and provides a strong promotion.



## WATER WAYS - WAYS TO TOGETHER

TOTAL BUDGET: € 39.979



SLOVAKIA

*The project followed the idea of supporting local artists, developing the creativity and to improve the environment and landscape in the LAGs.*

The aim of this cooperation project was to create creative artistic meetings with Slovak and Czech artists, internships and workshops to support and enhance traditional craft and artistic skills and contribute to the protection of intangible cultural and historical heritage. The involved LAGs have had informal cooperation before and have a very good reputation in their territories, so it was natural that they became the organisers of such a project. The project was realised in three regions of Slovakia and Czech Republic. It started in a Czech region with a meeting and a first critical thinking about concepts of works. The concepts and designs were then discussed within the communities in all three regions. Finally, Czechoslovak artists created their works within symposiums placed in all the LAG territories with a view to enhance the landscape. The vernissage was connected with a folk festival.

This project highlights another asset of the LEADER approach: to bring people together and create something together – within and outside the regions. These kinds of projects help to strengthen communities, promote cultural heritage, enrich the environment and also support local artists – a specific group of creative people. The resulting artworks are also increasing the potential of rural areas in rural tourism development.



## OUTDOOR FITNESS - SPORTS FOR HEALTH

TOTAL BUDGET: € 78.900

*The project brings high quality sports infrastructure to the inhabitants.*

The project focused on the construction of two outdoor fitness centres in Mojš and Strečno in the Žilina region. The outdoor fitness zones were one of the first of this kind in Slovakia. They were built near the tourist attraction – Žilina dam. The municipalities of Strečno and Mojš rented space for this purpose to the LAG Terchovská dolina and will participate in the maintenance and operation of the sports facilities. With this innovative project, the LAG supports tourism and leisure time infrastructure, space for the development of physical culture and sport for the inhabitants of the LAG region, as well as the inhabitants of Žilina and its surrounding villages. The sports facilities are fully available, open to the public and located near hiking and biking trails, so they also serve visitors to the region. The project brings high quality services to the inhabitants and at the same time also attracts visitors boosting the local economy.

This project was chosen because of its orientation on investments to increase the quality and accessibility of public services. In the period from 2007 – 2013 these types of LEADER projects were the most common type in Slovakia, which was criticised by LEADER experts, as many of them were developed with the leadership in municipalities hands. This situation is changing very slowly with the development of an active civil society in the countryside.



The Slovenian countryside is adorned with a wide variety of wonders. Natural resources, historical and cultural heritage and ground-breaking ideas are the crucial elements for the development of rural Slovenia. As the challenges of rural development are so widely intertwined, it is of major importance to raise the level of cooperation, mutual learning and coordinated action. Since the foundation of the Slovenian rural development network (SRDN) in 2002, this has been our main motive. We operate as an umbrella rural NGO network for the development of Slovenian rural areas, awarded with the status of an association operating in the public interest in the field of agriculture. SRDN is a grass-root organisation, recognized as one of the most important social partners of the government in rural development particularly in LEADER/CLLD. Most of the LAGs in the country are members of the SRDN.



#### Main activities:

- Informing, training and promotion: SRDN organises several events per year and publishes a monthly electronic newsletter.
- SRDN was appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture as the national CLLD contact point due to its high number of member LAGs. Challenges of the CLLD programme, as well as legislation and regulation matters, are objects of discussion and submissions to the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Cooperation, representation and nationwide networking: Representatives from the SRDN are participating in committees, boards, and related authorities (e.g.: Slovenian Rural Parliament, European Rural Parliament, etc.).
- International cooperation: SRDN is actively involved in the operation of several bodies at the European level (ENRD, ELARD, PRE-PARE). Experts from the SRDN are supporting the rural movements and LEADER initiatives in the countries of South and Western Balkans and in the Black Sea countries.

In the programming period of 2014-2020 EAFRD and ERDF contributed to the implementation of LEADER/CLLD programme in Slovenia. That was significant progress, though due to decentralised management we faced many implementation and administration obstacles. Through the great efforts of SRDN and other national institutions, in the next period CLLD will also be supported by ESF.



## SLOVENIAN HANDICRAFTS – ZGODBE ROK IN KRAJEV

ELIGIBLE COSTS: € 236.722 (CO-FINANCED BY THE ERDF)



11 LAGs from all part of Slovenia were involved in the project “Slovenian Handcrafts – Zgodbe rok in krajev”. The aim of the project was the creation of a supportive environment for handcrafts in Slovenia. The main activities were raising an inventory of the existing handcrafts, organizing trainings, upgrading the image and the promotion of the handcrafts. One of the main challenges was the creation of a modern visual identity for this precious heritage, as stimulation for more efficient marketing of the local, hand-made products. The main outputs were the creation of a handcraft network, improved quality and functionality of the products, promotion of the handcrafts on a website, facebook, at several events and presentations at fairs and exhibitions. Handicraftsmen were trained at several trainings sessions by hired interdisciplinary experts. There was an excellent publication of a book with 100 stories, describing the ancient way of life visualizing the heritage of Slovenian handcrafts.

## GLAMUR – GENUSS AM FLUSS/UŽITEK OB REKI

ELIGIBLE COSTS: € 463.000



Three LAGs from the cross-border area between Slovenia and Austria gathered in the TNC project “GLAMUR – Genuss am Fluss/Užitek ob reki”. The aim of the project is to emphasize the quality of local products, to increase exchanges in the border area and stimulate the local economy. 26 Municipalities from both sides of the border are involved in the setting up of local “trading corners”, where the local products are sold to the consumers – thereby trying to mitigate the devastating effects of the global economy on local markets. An important dimension of the project is the cooperation in the promotion of the region as a tourist destination in the border area along the river Mura. The area is popular with several thermal spas and authentic, diverse landscapes and received the status of “Biosphere Reserve” by the UNESCO in 2018.



## “LEADER/CLLD INSIGHTS”

Slovenia started with the implementation of the LEADER approach in the programming period 2007-2014. Before that period, the Ministry of Agriculture successfully implemented a »LEADER like« programme called » Holistic Rural Development and Village Renewal - Celostni razvoj podeželja in obnova vasi« lasting more than 15 years. 37 LAGs are covering practically the whole rural territory of the country. From almost 6.000 settlements in Slovenia, approximately 1% are ghost towns. Depopulation is one of the main challenges of the country, which has – besides this – a relatively good balance between the rural and urban population. Though Slovenia is slowly losing its leading position regarding the indicator GPD/capita within the so called “Eastern European” countries, several other indicators justify extraordinary life quality. Diverse geographical characteristics, varying from the Mediterranean to Alpine climate impose a high potential for tourism. Rural tourism seems have the biggest development potential for the country and luckily many rural inhabitants share the same opinion. We see this by analysing the LEADER/CLLD projects, where initiatives in tourism are dominating all others.

The LEADER programme was upgraded to a CLLD programme in the current period, since the ERDF and EMFF joined EAFRD supporting Local Development Strategies. The average financial potential of each LAG is € 2.5 million, but there are significant the differences between LAGs. A threefold partnership exists between the LAG, Managing Authority and Paying Agency with ongoing dialogue. All levels feel the burden of the administrative obstacles in the CLLD programme, with the weakest stakeholders at local level being the real victims. Since no advanced payments are possible in this programming period, the main selection of the final beneficiaries is made through the financial and human resource capacities of the stakeholders. In spite of that, CLLD in Slovenia is one of the most successful stories. Thousands of beneficiaries are contributing to rural development in the best way, overcoming the financial and administrative burdens with tremendous innovative. The influence of CLLD in Slovenia has positive impacts on tourism, entrepreneurship and at a slightly smaller scale on society, environment and culture.

CLLD in Slovenia is a story of success mainly because of the balanced combination of the bottom-up initiatives and top-down measures. Due to the high level of voluntary inputs from the final beneficiaries, CLLD delivers extraordinary positive multiplication effects, keeping the rural areas vital and sustainable.



### GORAN ŠOSTER (LAG PRLEKIJKA)

is living and working predominantly in Slovenia, with strong engagement in European non-governmental organisations • Executive director of Regional Development Agency Prlekija and LAG Manager • Co-founder of the Slovenian Rural Development Network (2002) and its President in the years 2008-2014 • Coordinator of PREPARE in the years 2009-2014 and president of PREPARE in the years 2016-2018 • Co-founder of the Slovenian Rural Parliament and co-chair of the European Rural Parliament • Co-author and editor of the book Rural Parliaments – Emerging Participative Democracy • Researcher, economist, ecologist, pioneer of organic farming in Slovenia and PhD candidate in Local Economies • More than 30 years of experience in the field of regional and rural development, organic agriculture, sustainable tourism and ecology.

## SPANISH NETWORK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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The Spanish Network for Rural Development (REDR) is a non-profit making association which was founded in 1995 with the aim to promote an integrated and sustainable model of rural development.

The REDR is currently made up of regional networks, which include over 180 LAGs throughout Spain. These LAGs manage programmes and initiatives related to rural development, essentially LEADER/CLLD.

The REDR has great challenges to face in Spain: combatting depopulation and impoverishment of specific rural areas, improving the quality of life of the people who live in rural areas, bridging the urban-rural gap and simplifying the grants administrative management at all stages.

A major progress of the last years was that LEADER has increased its participatory level, improving the transparency of information and legitimacy of the LEADER approach.

For the future, the REDR wants to strengthen its presence in national and international rural development fora promoting policies which improve the well-being and permanence of the rural population, guaranteeing the quality of the environment as well as the economy in rural areas. REDR also wants to extend the services it provides to its associates to facilitate an integrated rural development.



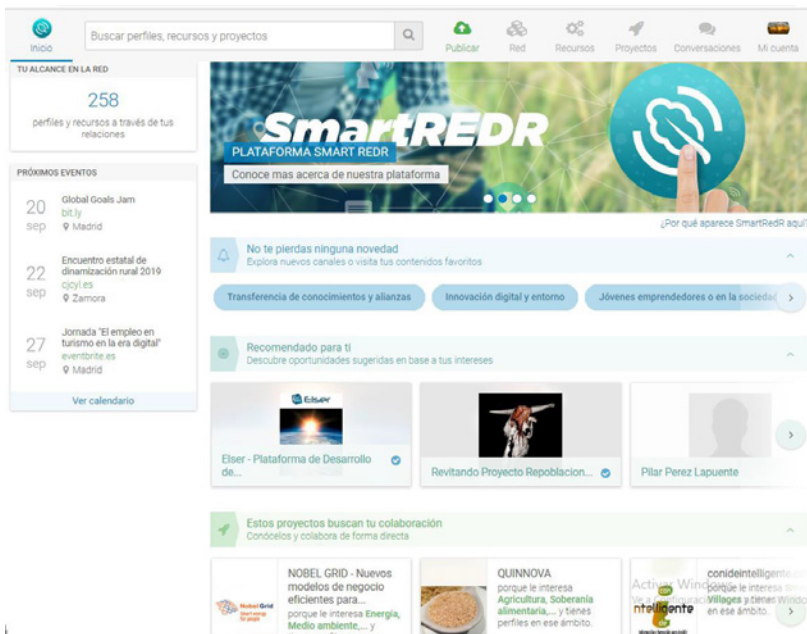


## SMART REDR ONLINE PLATFORM

TOTAL BUDGET: € 50.000 (MINISTRY OF HEALTH FUNDS)

*The aim of this platform is to democratise technological innovation in rural areas and digitalise the participation processes of citizens.*

The development of this platform is linked to the concept of Smart Villages, which contributes to improving the quality of life of people thus reducing the inequality gap in rural areas. The platform works as an on-line ecosystem in which public and private entities (companies, research centres, universities) in the field of R&D can connect with entities in the rural sector (LAGs, municipalities, SMEs, associations, etc.) in order to strengthen their ties of communication and to design projects, exchange experiences and knowledge of calls and participate in forums, discussions and debates. Thus, offering goods and services to the different actors in rural regions fostering innovation in order to boost their economies. Additionally, the platform also strengthens local capacities in the use and management of virtual platforms.



## RIOJA ORIENTAL WINE ROUTE

TOTAL BUDGET: € 360.000



SPAIN

*We want to showcase the diversity of viniculture in La Rioja Oriental.*

The LEADER-funded project “Rioja Oriental Wine Route” started in 2017 and runs until 2021. It consists of the integration of different services and points of interest related to the viniculture in “La Rioja Oriental”. Viniculture plays an important economic and cultural role in this region. The regional development association “ADR La Rioja Suroriental”, operating in the Autonomous Community of “La Rioja”, is the project promoter. The aim of this project is to build a genuine identity of the region as well as to promote a joint marketing and to guarantee certain service standards. Therefore, the touristic value chain was orientated towards wine as a guiding topic combining it with cultural and natural elements of the region: the tourist should experience the diversity of viniculture throughout the whole trip along the route.

<https://rutadelvinoriojaoriental.com/>



We selected this project because it shows how to link public and private projects by a theme – in this case the theme is wine – and to promote them jointly. This is an important result of the LEADER process. The project also highlights the enormous potential of wine tourism, which became a powerful promotional tool in Spain contributing to a positive image of the regions and simultaneously promoting wines and other products and services of the regions. Further tasks are now to differentiate and connect the different wine regions.



Photo credit: Javier Perez Calvo



Photo credit: Juan Montiel



**Key drivers**

- Using LEADER trust to take on more integrated policies
- Building on rural image of health, well-being, quality & innovation
- Put people first, strengthen partnership
- Use NFI & social economy to link to emerging consumer needs
- Teleworking & access to services
- Opportunities for young returners



**What can be done to make things better?**

- (b)etter (c)ommunity (d)evelopment
- (e)conomic (f)lexibility
- (g)reen (h)ousing
- (i)ntegrated (j)ob creation
- (k)nowledge (l)earning
- (m)ulticultural (n)etworking
- (o)rganic (p)roduction
- (q)uality (r)esilience
- (s)ustainable (t)ourism
- (u)nic (v)illage (w)orking
- (x)en (y)outh (z)ero



Photo credit: Johanna Grundström

Local Development Sweden (Lokal Utveckling Sverige - LUS) started as an informal network consisting of 5 LAGs and established as an organisation in 2014. Since 2017 our member coverage is 100 % of the LAGs. LUS is a national, politically and religiously independent association for Swedish organisations working with community-led local development. Our mission is to strengthen and further develop the LEADER approach.

LUS is a resource for advancing and pursuing issues concerning the LEADER approach in a national and international perspective, representing the Swedish LAGs and FLAGS in different

organisations, authorities and decision-making bodies. We also aim to increase the exchange of knowledge between LAGs/FLAGS on a regional, national and international level.

Multi-funding is working quite well in Sweden in this period (2014-2020). We have had one Managing Authority and only three different programmes that have been streamlined under that same authority. We believe that multi-funding is essential in the LEADER-method, answering to the needs and development possibilities of local actors. In order to achieve a more noticeable impact on local level, we need to raise the level of financial support from the funds that are not the EARFD. Of course, we also promote simplification on all levels, but especially for the beneficiaries.



## RESOURCE MODEL FOR SMALL BUSINESSES, TOURISM INDUSTRY AND ASSOCIATIONS

TOTAL BUDGET: € 200.000 (ESF)

*Sweden was one of the countries that took on the most refugees per capita in the last years - integration has therefore become a very important topic in our LAGs.*

Organized by the LAG Stockholmsbygd and taking place in Norrtälje municipality's rural area, this project started in the spring of 2018 and will continue until 2020. But it already showed results in the first year, in addition to the huge expectations.

The project is run by Coompanion Roslagen & Norrort, an economic association with some thirty members, consisting mainly of cooperative and social enterprises. The aim of the project is to create paths for about 30 people from third countries to internships and work in local associations and businesses, and to start a "social staffing company" that will help the project's target group to sell their services without having to start their own company.

The project offers a multi-stage support and is active on several levels. Training of third-country nationals begins with a focus on language skills together with an introduction of Swedish work and association life. The project establishes contact with associations that need people for the implementation of major events, a good first step for the project participants to train their language skills in a Swedish context. The project also recruits so-called bridge builders, who, if necessary, can act as intermediaries between project participants and the association / company that offers workplace training. Individual assessments are produced continuously during training and internships to facilitate matching.

The first results show that the concept works, a project participant has received an appointment with his company trainee organizer, another got a part-time job and a third has received a short-term contract in a toy store.

<https://stockholmsregionen.coompanion.se/resursmodell/>

In 2015 more than a million migrants and refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and other countries crossed into Europe. One of the countries that took on the most refugees per capita was Sweden. Integration is a very important topic in all our LEADER-work during this programming period. We also use CLLD in this programming period, and this project is one of our ESF-funded projects.

When the LAG discussed the application for the first time, clearer anchoring was required among the municipality's companies. Thanks to their own but also the LAG's network, the project owner managed to engage both non-profit bridge builders and companies interested in participating in the project, and we are convinced that this is a contributing factor to the rapid positive results that the project can now show. We see the same factor in other projects - anchoring before starting is often crucial for success or failure.



## TUFF RURAL (TUFF = GROWTH DEVELOPMENT FOR ENTREPRENEURS)

TOTAL BUDGET: € 61.400 (ERDF)

*Thanks to the project, new companies were founded and existing companies have developed both themselves and their businesses.*

“TUFF Rural” is based on a strong bottom-up perspective and asked for the needs of existing entrepreneurs, which is one success factors.

The partnership is reinforced by the project manager's clear links to the public, private and non-profit sectors. One of the project's focus areas is to create meeting places for networking across county and municipal boundaries. The project has involved a lot of activities in the countryside, which would not have been carried out without the support. Due to the project, the border area between the three municipalities has become a center for the development of smaller companies. The project has also benefited from the high availability of the LEADER office in Vimmerby.

The goal of “TUFF Rural” is to develop new and existing companies in the rural areas of Eksjö, Vimmerby and Hultsfred municipalities. The project's number of participants is, before the end of the project, twice as large compared to the target. So far, the project has generated two new companies, and individual companies have been converted into a limited liability company. In addition, existing entrepreneurs, thanks to the project, have developed both themselves and their businesses, including product development, increased sales and active sustainability and board work.

Supporting entrepreneurs in rural areas is a strong focus for all LAGs in Sweden. As we work with CLLD during this programming period, the ERDF makes more support possible.



SWEDEN



## SALMON RACE 2.0 - SALMON IN LIVING RIVERS

TOTAL BUDGET: € 173.132 (EMFF)

*Salmon race 2.0 allows students to gain in-depth knowledge of the salmon's life and habitat and teachers of how to teach in an outdoor environment.*

The salmon-race is an important part of creating a long-term sustainable management of the existing resources in the geographical area. Combining current research in education with children will hopefully create an interest for future challenges.

After the project's two years run-time, 50 school classes will have gained in-depth knowledge of the salmon's life and habitat integrated in a sustainability perspective based on the global environmental goals. Their teachers and other school staff will also gain in-depth knowledge of how outdoor education can work thematically on themes related to the river and the salmon.

The project is called Salmon-race 2.0, since there was a similar project in 1997-99. The university wanted to study wild salmon females' migration from the stairs to the play areas in the Vindel River. To some extent, the research was financed by giving companies, associations, municipalities, etc. the opportunity to "adopt" a salmon female for a sum of money.

To get started with such a large project with many people involved, good cooperation and much planning is required before starting. Together, the Nature School in Umeå, the energy provider Vattenfall, SLU and the LEADER office have done a great job through real LEADER spirit.

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Using the EMFF in combination with other funding is a priority within our FLAGs during this programming period. Still, some areas are working with only EMFF, since it is more reasonable, Vindelälven being one of these.



## SNOW-ELDORADO

TOTAL BUDGET: € 416.400



SWEDEN

*“Snow-Eldorado” started as a skiing project for kids but became a major initiative for the whole municipality*

“Snow-Eldorado” is one of these typical community building initiatives that creates a lot of ripple-effects and added value that is typical for the LEADER-method. At the same time these tend to be found hard to define and talk about. It would be great if LEADER Närheten can define things that have arisen through using the LEADER-method in this particular project, once it is completely finalized. We could imagine that there could be effects as: increased public health, increased entrepreneurship around the slope, increased sense of pride and belonging in Fryksta itself, increased networking and cooperation in the society, for example.

Kil's slalom club wanted to make a “Snow-Eldorado” to create various activities on skis that are child friendly. It became a major initiative that makes the municipality more attractive for its citizens and where the effects of the project were transferred to entrepreneurs in the local area.

The club has a solid background and consists of very strong basis of volunteers - this was an important factor when the LAG prioritised the project, since the project involves large investments as well as a huge amount of voluntary work that has to be carried out continuously, year after year. Very high demands are put on the capacity of the association and also on their cooperation with other associations and the public sector. The results are not compiled, yet the association sees a phenomenal increase in active people on the slope “Frykstabacken” which is a success in itself!

<https://www.kilsslk.com/>

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Using the LEADER-method with the EARFD has a lot to do with entrepreneurship and innovation, as well as tourism and attractiveness throughout our country. Moreover, community building and village development are very important measures since they create meeting-places and a more attractive place to live, work and act in. This in turn is proven to create more prosperous places.

## COLOPHON

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**“DESPITE ITS MODEST FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK, THE LEADER APPROACH HAS SERIOUSLY TAKEN ROOT AND MANAGED TO ENGAGE THOUSANDS OF ENERGETIC RURAL DEVELOPERS.”**

**“WE BELIEVE THAT MULTI-FUNDING IS ESSENTIAL IN THE LEADER-METHOD, ANSWERING TO THE NEEDS AND DEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITIES OF LOCAL ACTORS.”**

**“TO LISTEN AND TO HEAR WHAT PEOPLE NEED AND TO LOOK FOR COMMON SOLUTIONS – THIS IS THE LEADER SPIRIT AND VALUE.”**

**“LEADER FUNDING BRINGS SECTORAL ACTORS TOGETHER IN A PRODUCTIVE, CREATIVE PROCESS.”**

**“CLLD STRENGTHENS THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY: PEOPLE TAKE DECISIONS THAT IMMEDIATELY TRANSFORM INTO CONCRETE ACTIONS AND INTERVENTIONS WITHIN THEIR TERRITORY.”**

**“LEADER DEVELOPED THE LOCAL CULTURE, LEISURE ACTIVITIES, LOCAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES, RURAL TOURISM, LOCAL FOOD, CREATIVE INDUSTRY AND OTHER NON-AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISES.”**

**“LEADER DEVELOPS THE ABILITY TO HANDLE THE GREAT CHALLENGES WE FACE.”**

**“INCREASING INNOVATIONS AND IMPROVING COMPETITIVENESS OF BUSINESSES ACROSS RURAL AREAS IS A FOCAL POINT OF LEADER/CLLD IMPLEMENTATION.”**



European Leader Association  
for Rural Development  
Brussels, [www.elard.eu](http://www.elard.eu)

Portuguese  
Presidency  
2018 – 2019



PROGRAMA DE  
DESENVOLVIMENTO  
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UNIÃO EUROPEIA  
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A Europa Investe nas Zonas Rurais

