

User Guide *for* **LEADER** *Trainers*



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*Interactive buttons
in header*

*Contents
page*

*Previous
page*

*Next
page*



Notice

This user guide is based upon the 2016 edited 'Guideline for RRED Trainers' which was specifically written for the use in Kosovo. The editor was based at the GIZ Kosovo office. The authors were:

Dr. Georg Bokeloh, Uwe Krappitz (1956-2018), Avni Ramadani, Gero Wieschollek.

The available user guide can be seen as a complementary update to the 2016 version. The content was adjusted in many cases for this document, but some basic content remains the same. Some figures, material, and references have been updated. In addition, this user guide is intended to be used in all Western Balkan countries.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
ARDA	Agricultural and Rural Development Agency (Albania)
CLLD	Community Led Local Development
COVID-19 19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSF	Common Strategic Framework (EU)
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EU)
ERDF	European Fund for Regional Development (EU)
e. g.	For example (Latin: <i>exempli gratia</i>)
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EU)
ESF	European Social Fund (EU)
etc.	etcetera
EU	European Union
FBIH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
GIZ	German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH)
LAG	Local Action Group
LCD	LCD projector
LDS	Local Development Strategy
LEADER	Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale (Links between actions for the development of the rural economy)
MAFWE	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy (North Macedonia)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RDN	Rural Development Network Kosovo
RDP	Rural Development Programme
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USP	Unique Sales Proposition



List of figures

Figure 1: Sustainable Development Goals.....	13
Figure 2: The seven-key features of LEADER.....	25
Figure 3: Levels of Participation.....	30
Figure 4: Mobilisation of Stakeholders.....	31
Figure 5: Local Development Strategy - Elaboration process.....	45
Figure 6: Real example of objectives and ideas in the action field infrastructure and economy.....	49
Figure 7: Considerations for monitoring and evaluation.....	61
Figure 8: Different levels of depth and target groups for M&E in a LAG.....	64
Figure 9: Example of a schedule.....	73
Figure 10: Example of a visualisation.....	74
Figure 11: Moderation Kit.....	75
Figure 12: Different markers.....	75
Figure 13: Flipchart.....	76
Figure 14: Moderation board (also: Metaplan board).....	76

List of tables

Table 1: Comparison of LEADER programmes.....	11
Table 2: Links between LEADER and SDGs.....	13
Table 3: Levels of participation - description.....	30
Table 4: Examples of types of events.....	34
Table 5: Stakeholder analysis matrix (Example).....	37
Table 6: Checklist for stakeholder analysis.....	38
Table 7: Criteria for LAGs.....	41
Table 8: Overview LDS.....	46
Table 9: Possible selection criteria of rural projects.....	55
Table 10: List of questions to a project owner or initiator (example).....	56
Table 11: Criteria for the selection of projects.....	57
Table 12: Methods for M&E.....	65
Table 13: Example of Questionnaire.....	68
Table 14: Planning an event.....	72
Table 15: Examples of event-formats.....	74



Foreword

The LEADER Approach stands for area-based, bottom-up and multi-sectoral rural development. The approach is based on autonomous public-private partnerships at the local level for designing and implementing their very own, unique development strategies.

The guiding principles of the LEADER Approach proved to be success-factors for self-determined community-led local development, not only in the European Union but also more broadly.

In Southeast Europe the importance of the LEADER Approach in unlocking the potential of rural regions has been realized and the preparation process for its implementation is currently at different.

Within the project „Support to economic diversification of rural areas in Southeast Europe“ (SEDRA), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South-East Europe (SWG RRD) are working on strengthening of the capacities of stakeholders to support rural development in Southeast Europe.

The capacities of public-private stakeholder networks, known as Local Action Groups (LAGs) are strengthened in order to support development and implementation of community-led, local development strategies and to sustainably secure their funding through national schemes and EU instruments for pre-accession assistance.

Considering that the capacities of different actors involved in the implementation of the LEADER approach are on different levels, the SEDRA project prepared this “Guide for LEADER Trainers”, as a tool for strengthening the competences of LAGs and rural development actors.

The Guide provides support and guidance, as well as practical tools for forming future trainers to disseminate practical information, knowledge and experiences for the realisation of LEADER, community-led and area-based development in Southeast Europe.

On behalf of GIZ SEDRA

Benjamin Mohr

Team Leader

On behalf of SWG

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Secretary General



How to use this user guide

This user guide shall support trainers in their workshops and seminars about the LEADER topic.

It is the result of two 'Trainings of Trainers' conducted within the SEDRA programme of GIZ and SWG in 2019. The user guide is practice-oriented and helps to introduce and work on the LEADER topics, but it can also be used for other Regional Rural (Economic) Development activities, certainly in regard to methodology.

The first part of each chapter describes the objectives of the session together with possible guiding questions. This may help to start brainstorming and promote discussion in a specific field with the participants.

After that, the specific topic of each chapter is dealt with.

The section 'Format of workshop or session' gives an example of how to handle the topic in a seminar or workshop. It is a suggestion which is based upon long-term experience in the LEADER context. Of course, other formats or ways of doing this are also possible. We also want to encourage the trainers to find own solutions and to incorporate and use methods from their own experiences.

The final chapter, chapter seven, is different from the others as it is a methodological chapter. It presents the 'raw' ideas of moderation and visualisation. It may be seen as presenting basic information which should be extended for further moderation of events and development processes.

Gero Wieschollek

November 2020



Contents

Foreword	6
How to use this user guide.....	7
Contents.....	8
A. Introduction to LEADER.....	10
Chapter 1: The LEADER programme and approach	10
1.1 The LEADER programme.....	10
1.1.1 Focus of the training.....	10
1.1.2 The LEADER programme at a glance.....	10
1.1.3 LEADER and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).....	11
1.1.4 LEADER and the Western Balkan countries.....	14
1.1.5 Challenges and opportunities for Western Balkan countries.....	20
1.2 Format of workshop or session.....	22
1.2.1 Reflection on SDGs.....	22
1.2.2 Discussion of the situation of LEADER on the Western Balkan.....	23
1.3 References.....	24
1.4 The LEADER approach.....	25
1.4.1 Additional principle: Decentralised management and financing.....	27
1.5 Format of workshop or session.....	27
1.6 References.....	28
B. LEADER in Practice.....	29
Chapter 2: Participation in LEADER.....	29
2.1 Focus of the training.....	29
2.2 Stakeholder participation.....	29
2.3 Levels of participation	30
2.4 Mobilisation of stakeholders.....	31
2.5 Format of workshop or session.....	35
2.5.1 Introduction to participation.....	35
2.5.2 Stakeholder analysis.....	37
2.6 Material.....	38
2.6.1 Checklist for stakeholder analysis.....	38
2.7 References.....	39
Chapter 3: Local Action Groups and LAG Management.....	40
3.1 Focus of the training.....	40
3.2 Local Action Group (LAG).....	40
3.3 The LAG management.....	41
3.4 Format of workshop or session.....	42
3.5 References.....	43



Chapter 4: Local Development Strategy	44
4.1 Focus of the training.....	44
4.2 Elaboration of a LDS.....	44
4.3 Legal framework for the elaboration of a LDS within LEADER.....	44
4.4 How to elaborate a participatory LDS.....	46
4.5 Format of workshop or session.....	50
4.5.1 Situation analysis.....	50
4.5.2 Elaboration of a LDS.....	51
4.6 References.....	53
Chapter 5: Projects in LEADER	54
5.1. Focus of the training.....	54
5.2 Financing of projects in LEADER.....	54
5.3 Identification of projects.....	54
5.4 Project selection.....	55
5.4.1 Selection criteria of rural projects.....	55
5.4.2 Selection of projects in the LAG.....	55
5.5 Format of workshop or session.....	56
5.6 Material.....	56
5.6.1 List of questions to a project owner or initiator.....	56
5.6.2 Criteria for the selection of projects.....	57
5.7 References.....	59
Chapter 6: Monitoring and Evaluation	60
6.1 Focus of the training.....	60
6.2 Monitoring and Evaluation.....	60
6.2.1 Background.....	60
6.2.2 Important consideration for M&E.....	60
6.3 Format of workshop or session.....	67
6.4 Material.....	68
6.4.1 Outline of a questionnaire: Assessing the Regional Development Team.....	68
6.5 References.....	70
C. Method for working in LEADER	71
Chapter 7: Moderation	71
7.1 Focus of the training.....	71
7.2 Why moderation?.....	71
7.3 Planning of an Event.....	72
7.4 Example for a Scenario.....	73
7.5 Examples of event-formats.....	74
7.6 Materials.....	75
7.7 References.....	77



A. Introduction to LEADER

Chapter 1: The LEADER programme and approach

1.1 The LEADER programme

1.1.1 Focus of the training

Learning objectives

The participants will be able to understand:

- the specific LEADER approach in the EU-context;
- LEADER in the context of the Western Balkan countries;
- the seven LEADER principles as guidelines for rural development;
- the LEADER methodology.

Guiding questions

What is the history of LEADER?

What is the specific situation in each Western Balkan country?

What will be the further development of LEADER?

What is the LEADER approach or LEADER methodology?

Why is this approach helpful for rural development?

1.1.2 The LEADER programme at a glance

The idea of local rural development came up in the 1980's with support from different programmes of the OECD and other organisations¹. Previously, rural development had not been at the top of the agenda for the EU; however, at the end of the 1980's, a great dynamism came into the discussion. The LEADER programme was developed in the early 1990's with the intention of supporting rural areas and the activities of people within these areas. It was not focused on the agricultural sector, but on topics and activities within rural areas. The programme was introduced to strengthen initiatives and to develop feasible and useful projects for rural areas together with their local and regional stakeholders.

After five programme-periods, the LEADER approach is now well-known and accepted in rural areas across the EU, with great success visible across all twenty-eight EU states. It is evident that such a programme, with its various features, would also be an option for Western Balkan countries. With regard to future access to the EU, it not only helps Western Balkan countries to prepare for such access, but also helps to introduce a successful and democratic instrument for the development of rural areas.

.....
1 Application of the LEADER Approach in the Western Balkan Countries, p.10

Table 1: Comparison of LEADER programmes²

Heading	Period	Programme type	Number of LAGs	Total public budget (EU+ national) (euro)	Number of Member States
LEADER 1	1991-1993	Community Initiative	217 LAGs in lagging rural areas.	1.2 billion EUR	12
LEADER 2	1994-1999	Community Initiative implemented through 102 national/regional Operational Programmes	906 LAGs in lagging rural areas.	5.4 billion EUR	15
LEADER+	2000-2006	Community Initiative, implemented	1,153 LAGs in all rural areas.	5.1 billion EUR	15+10
LEADER Axis	2007-2013	Obligatory RDP/ Axis 4 measure (5% resp. 2,5% for new member states)	2,402 LAGs in all rural areas.	8.9 billion EUR	25+2
CLLD/ LEADER	2014-2020	Obligatory RDP Measure 19 (5%)	2,536 LAGs funded under EAFRD (with or without co-funding from ERDF and ESF) and 352 LAGs funded under EMFF ¹³ .	9.8 billion EUR	27+1

1.1.3 LEADER and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Brace for LEADER and SDGs: Sustainability

The concept of sustainability was first described around 300 years ago by the German economist Hannß Carl von Carlwitz³ concerning the economic use of forests. From that time, it became a principle of foresters to save the existing forest and to use, sell, and process only the additional timber they had. At the end of the 1960's, the idea of sustainability was newly set on the agenda of development cooperation, especially of development policies. The publication of the Club of Rome 'Limits of the Growth' in 1972⁴ and the 'Brundlandt Report' of 1987⁵ drew attention to this matter. In 1992, the UN-conference on environment and development (UNCED, 'Earth Summit') pushed sustainability as an issue onto a global level. From then on, the terms 'sustainable development' and 'sustainability' became very popular in politics and also within the economic sphere, too. But in many cases, it is not clear what exactly is meant, and how it can be reached and measured. This conceptual discussion is still ongoing.

Sustainability is also an important issue for LEADER, as we see in rural areas which face challenges relating to sustainability in ecological, economical, social, and cultural terms. The terms 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development' are often criticised in public as not being concrete and being more theoretical than practical. Indeed, it is hard for laypersons to understand what it means in their personal, everyday life, and why changing their behaviour and attitude is important. Besides 'sustainability', the term 'sustainable development' is also used. Within literature, many definitions of 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development' are found and widely discussed. An accepted definition is the following:

² Application of the LEADER Approach in the Western Balkan Countries p. 13

³ Sylvicultura oeconomica, p. 105-106

⁴ Limits of the Growth

⁵ Our Common Future, p. 16.



Sustainable development is *“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”* (Brundtland Report, p.16)

A very simple way of explaining sustainability is the “constant capital rule”⁶: the notion of living off interest or income and not consuming capital.

Many activities have been launched to inform the public about sustainability and to draw people into action. An important step to reach this goal was the UN document entitled ‘Agenda 21’ especially chapter 28⁷ of this document, as a result of the UNCED in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. In this chapter, local authorities from all over the world are requested to begin a dialogue and a process of consulting their citizens, enterprises, organisations, and civil society initiatives. The idea was to motivate people to engage, so that their own ideas and problems are revealed and a practical process for solving the development problems on Earth are discussed. This was the first time that not only the knowledge of experts was valuable, but also the experiences and the knowledge of everyday citizens in the villages, cities, and (rural) regions was taken into account.

Based upon that background, the LAG is a body which expresses this spirit strongly. Local Action Groups (LAGs) fulfil many aspects of such a consultation process, as requested in Agenda 21:

- Local authorities start a process of consultation with their citizens via the LAG management or decision-board, mostly within the format of the elaboration and implementation of Local Development Strategies.
- It is about finding a balance of interests in a rural region: a balance of economical, political / institutional, ecological and social / cultural interests.
- The approach of a LAG is always cross-cutting all sectors (and not sectorial), as it is also in the common understanding of sustainability.

At the UN-conference of Paris in 2015 (based on all of the precursor conferences such as the UNCED) seventeen Sustainable Development Goals were adopted (see figure 1).

Linkage of LEADER and SDGs

The seven key features (or principles) of LEADER (see chapter 1.2) give the format to the LEADER process and all activities with the programme. With regard to the SDGs, one can draw many comparisons and correlations between it and the LEADER approach:

.....
6 The Economics of Sustainability, p. 3

7 Chapter 28 ‘Local authorities’ initiatives in support of Agenda 21’.



Table 2: Links between LEADER and SDGs

LEADER Principle	Sustainable Development Goal
Area-based Local Development Strategy / Regional Development Programme for well-defined sub regional territories.	Goal No. 11 can, in particular, be interpreted in accordance with this LEADER principle.
Bottom-up approach concerning elaboration and implementation of the LDS.	To motivate and engage local actors → joint decision-making on how to implement the SDG's.
Local public-private partnerships: Local Action Group (LAG) with decision-making power for LAG.	To increase the capacities of LAG → dialogue exchange on SDG's; to create a space or platform for dialogue of public administration, civil society, politicians, and stakeholders.
Multi-sectorial design of Local Development Strategy = interaction between actors and projects of different sectors.	To incorporate local knowledge in order to focus on the needs of the region.
Implementation of innovative approaches.	Priority setting of activities according to needs.
Networking of LAGs.	To foster intercommunal exchange and partnerships (also on an international level).
Implementation of cooperation projects: international / transnational.	

As the table above shows, many of the LEADER features also fit in with the SDGs, expressed in other words. The table above also points out the sustainable character of the LEADER approach.

Figure 1: Sustainable Development Goals

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS





1.1.4 LEADER and the Western Balkan countries

Many findings have been elaborated on in the study 'Application of the LEADER approach in Western Balkan countries - from a local initiative to mainstream concept in the rural areas'⁸. The study was supported by the 'Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South Eastern Europe' (SWG) in order to improve the understanding of the LEADER approach and contribute to its effective implementation. The following paragraph explains the ABD approach of the Western Balkan countries⁹:

"Following the LEADER Approach, the Area Based Development Approach (ABDA) serves as a regional tool by targeting defined geographical areas in cross-border regions which are characterised by a set of common, complex development problems.

"It is a regional local approach which facilitates sustainable growth in small and socially cohesive rural areas in decline, often characterised by a common tradition and identity. The ABDA supports the bottom-up development of area-based local development strategies which support local actors to participate in decision making and selection of priorities to be pursued in their local communities.

"By means of Stakeholder Groups (SHGs), acting like LAGs, the ABD supports the setting up of local partnerships, integration and multi-sectorial actions, stimulates innovation (introducing new products/ process/ markets) and finding solutions to persistent rural problems. The approach mostly facilitates networking and cooperation measures among the stakeholder groups, rural areas, administrations and organisations involved in rural development on exchanging achievements, experiences and know-how. Such co-operation can help local communities to boost their activities and allow them to resolve certain problems or add value to the local resources."

At the 2020 'Agricultural Policy Forum'¹⁰, which is an annual event organised by the SWG, Western Balkan countries took the opportunity to explain the actual (LEADER) situation and to present their road maps for the coming years. The following section summarises the contributions of the countries in the permanent 'Regional Expert Advisory Working Group on LEADER' of the SWG and gives an overview of the plans for LEADER implementation in Western Balkan countries. This summary shows a diverse and different picture across Western Balkan countries according to their individual conditions and financial potential.

The contributions were presented virtually at the conference and the complete presentations can be found on the SWG website¹¹.

8 Application of the LEADER Approach in Western Balkan Countries

9 Application of the LEADER Approach in Western Balkan Countries, p.14

10 Agricultural Policy Forum, 12th- 16th October 2020, organised virtually by the SWG due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

11 www.seerural.org



Albania

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has been making efforts to revise the overall policy framework and update the relevant sections of the 'National Plan for European Integration' as a response to the reforms required for the opening of the negotiations with the European Union, as well as the need to update the strategy for agricultural and rural development.

Over the past decade, rural livelihoods have been changing rapidly. In terms of institutional development, including the territorial reform which consolidated the 374 administrative units (309 rural and 65 predominantly urban) into 61 administrative units, the rural population has been experiencing a change in representation and governance. The Albanian government has been showing more attention toward territorial rural development over the past few years, especially with regard to the implementation of the 'Integrated Rural Development Programme +100 villages'. However, there has been no swift adoption of this new rural policy perspective and the local development initiative which are important in regard to the 'Intersectoral Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development' (ISARD) 2021-2027.

The overall aim of this assignment is to facilitate the process of setting up structures and delivery mechanisms for the LEADER measures during the current IPARD period and particularly in the period 2021-27, to increase the capacities for rural diversification and re-dynamisation of lagging rural areas in Albania.

For the year 2020/ 2021, a draft of law is in preparation as is the IPARD Measure 5 for consultation, communication, and the entrusted budget implementation task is to be continued. A draft for a capacity building programme for potential LAGs and for implementation of LEADER measures in Albania is planned to be developed. Also, the rules for funding and M&E are to be fixed until the end of 2020.

For 2021 many activities are planned:

- a campaign for LAG awareness raising, with training sessions for potential staff;
- an audit of capacities, memorandum of understanding between managing authority and paying agency;
- an update of the financial agreement;
- each LAG has to elaborate a Local Development Strategy, which should be approved at the end of the year 2021.

At the beginning of 2022, the LAGs can be able to start their work as planned, to disburse grants to selected LAGs and to sign a memorandum of understanding between LAGs and ARDA for implementation and self-monitoring.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina - Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH)

The LEADER concept of mobilising and achieving rural development in local rural communities is still not recognised as such and is still in its early phase. The LEADER concept and the role of LAGs is still unclear. There is a lack of financial and administrative support of the LAGs, and this is also true in regard to the establishment of new ones. The necessary IPARD structures for the withdrawal of these funds are not yet set up.

In 2020 the 'FBiH Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy' for the period 2021-2027 is being drafted and according to the terms of reference this document must provide a measure to support the LEADER approach, the work of LAGs, and drafting Local Development Strategies. Due to the undeveloped IPARD structure in BiH, it is currently an 'EU4Agri Replacement Programme' implemented by the UNDP and the Czech Republic Development Agency. This programme provides grant funds for strengthening the diversification of the rural economy. LAGs can also apply for grant funds.

The most relevant steps in 2020/2021 for the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the elaboration of a strategy as an important step for the further development of the LEADER



programme in the country. It should analyse the situation of existing LAGs and define strategic objectives, including the position of LAGs and measures to promote the LEADER approach and the LAGs. It is also necessary to create a legislative framework at the level of FBiH for positioning of the LEADER approach and the role of LAGs in rural development. Relevant amendments to the 'Law on Agriculture and Rural Development of FBiH' must also be made.

By the end of the next programme period in 2027, it is recommended that the following areas be strengthened:

- institutional capacities in the FBiH;
- the rural development network;
- links between regional and local development agencies with existing and future LAGs.

Furthermore, the LAGs need regular funding through budget transfers and the fulfilment of conditions for possible withdrawal of EU funds (IPA III or EU4Agri). Capacity building measures, especially with regard to motivating local stakeholders and the LAGs, should be implemented together with improving networking. Local Development Strategies need to be drafted as a key basis for planning future rural development.

Bosnia and Herzegovina - Republica Srpska (RS)

In 2020-2021, the legislative framework for LEADER has to be drafted in RS. This covers the law on agriculture and rural development of RS, a rulebook on accreditation of LAGs, and a rulebook or law on financial incentives for LAGs.

There is also a need to draft a strategy for the period 2021-2027, clearly defining the position of LEADER and LAGs in RS. The strategy should describe measures for LEADER and LAGs in regards to the development of agriculture and rural areas and the implementation procedures for LEADER.

On an operational level, a strategic document with defined measures relating to the support of the work of LAGs should be created. LAGs and LAG initiatives are of limited capacities and need support to build and develop educated LAGs staff for the administration and implementation of projects. Thus, the LAGs need educated staff with LEADER management skills. Over the coming years, the institutional capacities of LAGs should be strengthened through capacity building of LEADER stakeholders such as decision makers, staff from public authorities, LAG initiatives and their networks.

The decision makers at national, entity and cantonal levels should strive to find a compromise and organise a management structure for the IPA III programme in order to organise sustainable financing of LEADER measures and the work of LAGs in RS.

Kosovo

The LEADER Approach in Kosovo has been built based on the 'Agriculture Rural Development Programme' (ARDP) 2007-2013, followed by ARDP 2014-2020. The implementation of the LEADER programme in Kosovo is addressed through the following strategic policy documents:

- strategies for agriculture and rural development;
- mid-term programmes;
- IPARD II programmes;
- strategic and other documents on local development strategy.

Considering this context, Kosovo has made limited progress in the process of developing national agricultural strategies and control mechanisms. The EU progress report on Kosovo¹² encourages further development of the agricultural sector and harmonisation of national policies mainly in the areas of:

12 <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-kosovo-report.pdf>



- improving the evaluation and monitoring of grants and direct payments under the programme;
- revising and updating the programme so that investments in the sector are more efficient;
- taking urgent, effective measures to stop the loss of agricultural land and implement legislation on spatial planning.

In the nearer future the activities will concentrate on IPARD preparation, certification, and implementation. This means:

- assistance for investments and improvements for the fulfilment of the requirements needed for getting the same funds as other Western Balkan countries;
- adopting the ARDP plan for the period 2021 – 2027;
- updating the programme for investments in technical support of the agricultural economies and physical assets and other projects.

The current programmes end in 2020 and the new programme was planned to start in 2021, but it has been postponed until 2022 due to the situation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

A call for proposals, checks on eligibility, and selecting the appropriate LAGs will be activities within the programme's frame, together with the submission of the project proposals by LAGs. There is also a need to develop coherent indicators for the improvement of monitoring, evaluation and, reporting.

For LEADER in general, it is necessary to enhance the information and public awareness about it in Kosovo. This might be achieved through using a different approach to networking, establishing new partnerships, and creating and managing local partnerships. Therefore, the RDN should work more in expanding its network with new members and emphasise cross-regional rural development issues. Local animation, capacity building, enhancement of dissemination, and cooperation between stakeholders are key factors in this sense. Another key point is the improvement of project management skills for the LAG stakeholders. LAGs should implement the project management tool kit to strengthen the quality of projects delivered by LAGs and other beneficiaries.

In a long-term view (up to 2027), capacity building is crucial for the improvement of living conditions in rural areas. In the specific LEADER case it means capacity building of rural stakeholders and LAGs which should be enhanced, together with technical assistance. The RDN should expand its support of capacity building and technical assistance to LAGs in the new ARDP-programme period 2021-2027.

In order to secure an increase in funding (budgeting, disbursement, control) the Ministry of Agriculture should identify and select donors' projects to increase the amount of funding required for support of LAGs activities.

Montenegro

The LEADER Measure is included in the 'Programme for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas of Montenegro' as a part of the IPARD scheme. According to the IPARD II programme, the introduction of the measure, implementation of the 'Strategy for Local Development – LEADER approach' was planned for 2018. The LEADER measure is still on hold and will be the focus during accreditation. Significant progress has been made in the development of the regulatory settings, which encourages and makes it realistic that the LEADER measure becomes operational.

In order to contribute to a more balanced territorial development of rural areas in Montenegro, LEADER measure has been introduced in the 'Law on Agriculture and Rural Development' and it has been further elaborated on in the 'Programme for the Development of Agriculture and



Rural Areas of Montenegro' under IPARD II 2014-2020. In order to facilitate the process of setting up structures and to start with the CLLD/LEADER implementation, this document has been developed with the support of SWG. The new 'Programme for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas of Montenegro' within IPARD II is planned from 2020 onwards.

For the further development of LEADER, capacity building and raising awareness are important activities to be implemented. A long-term strategy for raising awareness on LEADER/CLLD for rural stakeholders (CSOs, agricultural producers, community representatives, cluster and association representatives) is needed. This activity can be supported by an external expert with support from the ministry and IPARD technical assistance or an international donor.

For the introduction of LEADER in 'Programme for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas of Montenegro' within IPARD II, the development of financial and technical support for creation of potential LAGs should be ensured.

A subcommittee for LEADER/CLLD implementation should be created (for steering and monitoring of the LEADER/ CLLD process). With the introduction of LEADER in the 'Law on Agriculture and Rural Development', a legal framework proposal for the creation, registration, and funding of LAGs should be developed, together with the development of methodology for Local Development Strategy creation.

Based on the potential LAG mapping process, the five most relevant LAG initiatives should be supported for registration and accreditation in 2022. Also, the creation of Local Development Strategies for registered and accredited LAGs should be finalised in 2022. The LAGs should be supported with specific trainings and capacity building measures. After that, the implementation of measures of Local Development Strategies – LEADER/ CLLD approach can start. As a follow-up activity, a review of the LEADER/ CLLD implementation is intended as a long-term-perspective.

North Macedonia

In 2019, a successful public call was announced for the implementation of Local Development Strategies under the 'National Programme for Rural Development'. Under the first public call in 2018, about thirteen LAGs were registered in the Ministry of Agriculture register. The strategic policy document for the implementation of the LEADER approach is stated within the 'National Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy'. The 'National Rural Development Programme' describes the support measures for implementing the LEADER approach. IPARD II envisaged the introduction of the LEADER approach as a new measure for the period 2014-2020 and the LEADER measure is to be introduced in 2020. As a part of IPARD II, the designed LEADER measure is one of the key documents for the development of the LEADER measure which needs to be reviewed. The accreditation procedure is prepared and the accreditation process of LEADER measure can begin. Until the accreditation process starts, the measure 'Technical Assistance' will serve for certain activities related the LEADER programme.

For further LEADER development, the modification of the legislative framework is needed (like articles 87, 89 in the Law on Agriculture, changes in the rulebook for preparation of LDS and in the rulebook for LAG registration). Also, the administrative capacities of MAFWE and the inter-sectorial cooperation should be strengthened.

For the implementation of LEADER measure in IPARD, an update of the LEADER measure fiche and a national and EU accreditation of the LEADER measure are necessary. Technical assistance in IPARD should provide support for LAGs for development of LDS and capacity building. The implementation of Local Development Strategies under the 'National Programme for Rural Development' should be completed. Capacity building measures of LAGs by RDN and the revision of the LDS of four LAGs should be started.

The cooperation of LAGs with the Ministry of Agriculture, the paying agency, the RDN, and municipalities should be strengthened. Also an exchange of experiences regarding both international and regional actions on LEADER should be offered. The networking among LAGs and



local stakeholders, by strengthening of the LEADER thematic group, need to be improved, and meetings conducted with local communities regarding LEADER should be intensified. The LAGs should be involved in the creation of methodology for financial support from the 'National Programme for Rural Development'. Planning of support for LAGs under the National Programme for Rural Development 2020 will follow.

Over the next few years the draft guidelines for LAG establishment, LDS preparation and evaluation has to be elaborated. The procedures for LEADER implementation have to be reviewed. On an operational level, clarification, and coordination meetings between LAGs, IPARD paying agencies and managing authorities on the LEADER implementation measures are needed. In general, further communication and greater trust between the ministry and the civil society needs to be improved.

Serbia

LEADER activities in Serbia started in 2006 with the completion of several projects supported by bilateral donor funding and later on with EU assistance. From 2011 to 2013 Serbia received EU financial assistance for the implementation of the project 'Capacity building for the Establishment and Implementation of a LEADER Initiative in the Republic of Serbia' (LIS project). In 2014, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Serbia (MAFWM) prepared and adopted the 'Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development' for the period 2014-2024. In addition, the EU has adopted the IPARD II programme for Serbia, fostering the further legislative work in the field of agriculture and rural development. From 2014 to 2017, the autonomous province Vojvodina provided support for LDS and implementation of small projects. In 2019, a public call for partnerships (potential LAGs) was launched for the first time on a national level. The base for LEADER in Serbia was set by the LIS project with the following results:

- training of potential LEADER animators and local community activities in this field;
- country-wide presentation of the LEADER concept;
- work with local community groups and Rural Development Network;
- completion of the whole process in setting up potential LAGs in 24 partnerships;
- 24 Local Development Strategies, of which 15 to 20 potential LAGs were close to passing selection on simulated requirements of the IPARD LEADER approach.

Most of the legal basis and institutional documents were drafted, but due to a lack of support this process was not sustainable.

On a provincial level, twelve 'PLAG (Potential Local Action Group) initiatives' received support for the LDS, and four received support for the implementation of small projects. The prescribed conditions were not prepared as a 'LEADER like' measure, and further support was missing due to the announcement of support at the national level. An institutional framework for implementing the LEADER approach was introduced through the IPARD II Programme, measure 9: Technical Assistance. It envisages support for the preparation of the potential LAG establishment as a basis for implementing the LEADER measure under the IPARD II Programme and measure 5. The accreditation of that measure is planned for 2021.

In 2019, a public call for submitting applications for recognition of potential LAGs was launched. At the beginning of 2020, 22 potential LAGs signed a grant agreement to develop a LDS. Also, implementation of the small projects is envisaged for 2020 after approval of the LDS. MAFWM established the group of independent experts for evaluation of submitted strategies and started that process in September 2020. It is expected that by the end of 2020 submitted strategies will be evaluated and first partnerships will receive recognition and further assistance in realisation of LDS in 2021.

22 potential LAGs are actively working with local communities and the monitoring committee, ensuring successful coordination at different stages of LEADER programme. Furthermore, the legal framework allows continual implementation of LEADER programme in Serbia. As for the



people and local communities, dedication is high and most of them are open to collaboration and are looking forward to taking part in different projects.

By the end of 2020, the approval of a national LEADER network will have taken place. It is planned that within the next two years IPARD preparation, certification, and implementation will be complete. Also, a national rulebook for LAGs and selection of eligible LAGs will be further developed.

From 2021 on, the implementation, monitoring of the establishment of the LEADER programme, and evaluation of the LEADER measure is planned. Also, an assessment of the LDS is envisaged.

A second call for partnerships and the first call for the implementation of the strategies (national measure LEADER) like the implementation of small projects up to 5,000 euro should be completed. The financing of further rural development projects must be assured.

In subsequent years, setting up LAG initiatives and the collaborations in different formats like meetings, workshops, guideline discussion etc. will be conducted. The databases will be enriched by collecting and analysing information about relevant activities in rural areas.

Networking and overall capacity building on all levels (regional, national, international) is planned. Therefore, consultants and experts in different fields of knowledge should be activated as 'Agents for Rural Development'. Small project programmes should be initiated with NGOs and civil participants. Although we face a lack of resources and political will, it is planned to incorporate independent experts and professors in LEADER networks and relevant meetings.

1.1.5 Challenges and opportunities for Western Balkan countries

Distinct from EU member states, the Western Balkan countries face different, specific challenges. First of all, they are not yet members of the EU (except Slovenia and Croatia) with access to EU-means. Thus, the Western Balkan countries are at different stages of the EU accession process. Each Western Balkan country has, in addition to EU instruments, its own national programme for agriculture and rural development. They all are working on reforms in all important systems like the governmental system to reach standards and the policies of the European Union. These processes need resources and are lengthy processes. That means the people in these countries need, amongst other things, patience and sufficient motivation and energy to see all these processes finished. From the EU's side, support is provided with the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and IPARD which is the most important instrument for the rural development process. LEADER is an integral part of IPARD, but not all of the Western Balkan countries use this opportunity of IPARD to promote LEADER.

The experience with the LEADER methodology shows the importance of participation of citizens and stakeholders in rural development. Therefore, Local Action Groups (LAGs), and the seven LEADER principles are, in the future, also important for the Western Balkan countries regarding improving quality of life in rural areas.

In the actual LEADER period some extraordinary circumstances influence the further programming for the next EU household 2021-2026 and the implementation of LEADER. The first event is 'Brexit', which has caused an unclear situation for a long time for all EU-institutions and decision-makers in European countries, especially with regard to financial issues. The second important influence is the COVID-19 pandemic which is ongoing, meaning the later consequences of the pandemic remain to be seen.



LEADER in the Western Balkan countries: Outlook

Working group two on the Agricultural Political Forum 2020¹³ elaborated upon a brief summary of opportunities, key barriers and perspectives for the further development of LEADER in the Western Balkan countries which are listed here:

Opportunities:

- A political will among institutions for LEADER accreditation and implementation, as well as legal and institutional setup can be stated.
- National schemes and Technical Assistance Measure of IPARD would support the most urgent financial needs for capacity building, networking, and local strategy development.
- The COVID-19 crisis, despite having a negative impact, does, in fact offer opportunities for rural areas, for example short distance commercialisation, domestic tourism, climate-friendly local development strategies, recognition of the essential role of local economy.
- The bottom-up policies implemented through LEADER programmes play a key role in boosting sustainable rural development, especially if the involved LAGs are based on existing public-private partnerships.

Key barriers:

- Lack of coordination among managing authorities, IPARD agencies and other relevant sectors.
- Limited financing and stakeholders' engagement.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened barriers and challenges around LEADER implementation.
- Lack of adequate levels of knowledge and technical skills in LAG management, product quality and safety and knowledge in new technology and market promotion skills.
- Weak coordination and involvement of various groups of rural stakeholders in building/strengthening sustainable partnerships through the existing LAGs.

Ways forward:

- To upgrade / develop adequate legislation and accelerate the accreditation of LEADER in IPARD.
- To implement and update the programme for investments in technical support of agricultural economies and investments in physical assets in the processing and marketing of agricultural products by supporting LAGs with several new projects, support of the environment and climate change and producers' organisations.
- To increase initiations and attendance of cross-regional cooperation and partnerships.
- To develop civil society and social dialogue within the rural population, facilitate good governance through local partnerships, foster employment, and develop human capital.

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13 <http://apf.seerural.org/outputs/>



1.2 Format of workshop or session

1.2.1 Reflection on SDGs

This chapter gives a general introduction into sustainability and SDGs. For an interactive way into the topic at least a half-day is required. For deepening and working on a regional level, group work of one day should be added (sum: 1.5 days). The theoretical input could be completed by a field trip to sustainable projects with between a half-day and a full-day. In summary, this module has a timeframe of half a day to a maximum of two-and-a-half days.

Type of session	Reflection, discussion/ Group Work
Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory phase (explanation of the task, composition of the groups): 15 minutes. • Working phase: discussion and visualisation in the group: 45-60 minutes. • Preparation phase for group presentation: 15 minutes. • Presentation phase: maximum 7-10 minutes per group. • (Total: 85-100 minutes for the whole group work). • If necessary, the working phase can be extended to maximum 60 minutes. If time permits, a break of 15 minutes could divide the preparation phase from the presentation phase. • Hint: Visualise the guiding question for each group (in this example: 5 copies) with its specific task so that for every participant it is clear what the task is. • This group work can also be conducted with more than one group in parallel, with working groups each with between 3 to 5 members (ideally from the same region).
Content	What role does sustainability play in a Local Development Strategy (alternative: in rural development)?
Questions for discussion	<p>How far / to what extent can you identify sustainable approaches/ ideas/ projects in your region?</p> <p>Please describe the sustainable features.</p>
Material	Board, moderation kit, flipchart (optional), and possibly LED.



Step #	Task of the moderator	Visualised task for the participants
Step 1	Visualise the task and instruction for the participants on a flipchart:	<p><i>“What role does sustainability play in this Local Development Strategy? Please take the Local Development Strategy of your (or another) region and check:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>How far / to what extent is sustainability described in the document? (Find keyword(s))</i> - <i>What are the criteria for sustainable projects in the LDS?</i> <p><i>Select / define 5 sustainability criteria for projects and check on 3 to 5 projects whether they fulfil these criteria.</i></p> <p><i>Please answer the questions and discuss the results.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare a presentation and present the result in the plenary session.</i></p>
Step 2	Ask the participants whether they understood the task. If not: explain it again.	
Step 3	Group(s) are working according to the format / conditions above	

Possible follow-up activity

Create (so-called) ‘buzz groups’, each of three persons. The groups work parallel for 10 to 15 minutes on the topic:

What are measures to raise awareness about sustainability in your (or a) rural region? Please visualise on the flipchart.

Therefore, each group is provided with markers and a flipchart. After that, the results are presented and discussed in a plenary session.

Duration: 45-60 minutes.

1.2.2 Discussion of the situation of LEADER on the Western Balkan

Type of session	Discussion
Duration	45 - 60 min.
Content	The situation of LEADER/ ABDA approach in the Western Balkan countries.
Questions for discussion	<p>What is the current situation?</p> <p>What can be improved concretely?</p> <p>What are some effective steps for the improvement?</p>
Material	Flipchart, markers.



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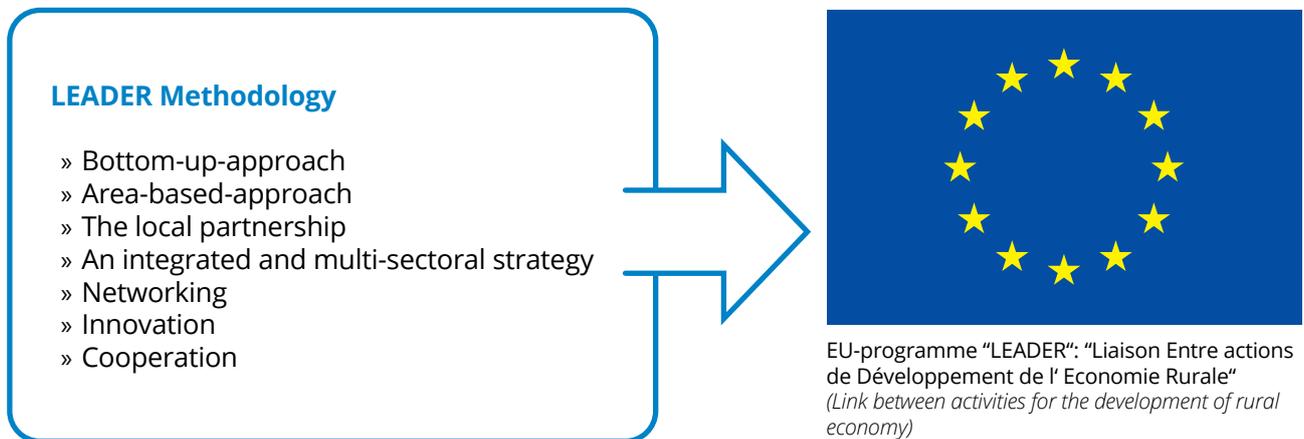
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1.4 The LEADER approach

LEADER is on one side an EU programme for the strengthening of rural areas and on the other side the programme's unique feature is the 'LEADER approach' which consists of seven key features (or principles). The practical application of the features is also known as 'LEADER Methodology'.

Figure 2: The seven-key features of LEADER



The seven key-features: a short description¹⁴:

» **Bottom-up approach**

The involvement of local actors and institutions in regional rural development is fundamental to the LEADER method. The rural inhabitants are seen as experts in their own region for their own concerns in the fields of economy, social affairs, identity, ecology and so on. Therefore, they are strongly involved in the development and implementation of the Local Development Strategy. This participatory tool supports and strengthens in a complementary way the existing democratic system. The bottom-up-approach has several advantages for the local and regional stakeholders as well as for the entire region (selection):

- Local actors have a better knowledge of local challenges that need to be addressed and the resources and opportunities available.
- Therefore, they are able to mobilise local resources for the development process in a way that does not happen with top-down approaches.
- This gives local actors a greater sense of ownership and commitment to the projects, which allows them to make the best of the local assets.
- However, this participative approach can only be effective if it develops trust among stakeholders and is supported by enduring local structures with the necessary experience and expertise.

» **Area-based approach**

The LEADER programme follows a territorial approach. This means that the area in which LEADER has to be implemented is more targeted than specific sectors. A LEADER region (also: LAG) has to be defined with clear borders. The LEADER area is defined by the people from the region themselves. That means, consequently, the borders are not necessarily along the existing

¹⁴ For each of the seven key features you can find further descriptions and slides on the website: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld/leader-toolkit_en



administrative borders, but can have their own defined shape. Often this shape is defined by natural, historical or cultural features. This is an important fact as the definition of the LEADER region expresses the area-based approach of the programme very well. In contrast to other programmes which deal with only one main topic, for example social affairs, ecology or agriculture, the area-based approach relies on all themes which are relevant for this specific region. Thus it can be called a cross-cutting approach. This means different themes are not treated separately, instead being treated in an integrated, interlinked way.

» **Local partnership: The Local Action Group**

Local Action Groups cover a defined area and the members come from both the private and public sectors. In contrast to other programmes or organisations the decisions about the development strategy and projects come not from the administrative hierarchy or politicians but from the inhabitants of the LAG region. It is a partnership considering the elected democratic representatives on one side and the needs and ideas of the local people on the other side. This participation of regional stakeholders is a principle of the work with the LEADER approach. It is often adopted by other institutions and programmes not only at the EU level, but also at a national level.

» **Integrated and multisectoral strategy**

The character of the local development strategy is integrative and crosscutting. This suggests that there will be challenges in meeting different opinions and interests. But it is the task of the LAG to find consensus among the different partners, interests and sectors in order to select and implement the most suitable projects for the region. Different areas (e.g. demography, environment, culture etc.) and projects should be linked. This expresses the cross-cutting approach and shows at the same time the dependencies behind the things as they are in reality. In practice, win-win-situations or synergies can in fact be created in which all partners can benefit.

» **Networking**

With the ubiquity of social media, the concept and practice of networking is now very common for many people. It is also an important principle of the LAGs work. The LAG can be seen as a local network. However, networking should have a wider range. Not only in and through the LAG in the region, but it should also be practised with other LAGs, other rural regions and institutions and so on. It helps the LAG to learn from others (best practice) and to exchange experiences. In a best case scenario, a cooperation project with another LAG could be the result of such networking.

» **Innovation**

Innovation is an important feature of the LEADER method. Innovative projects can help to improve the quality of living in a region to a better one than before. It does not mean the LAG should necessarily invent something that is a world first. Innovation means to introduce an approach, a project or a product which is new for the LAG region. The stakeholders and especially the LAG decision board must be convinced by innovative projects as there are always some uncertainties, if not risks, in innovative ideas. But innovation has the potential to support the development of the region and to improve the living conditions of the people.

» **Cooperation**

The idea of cooperation is very important in LEADER. The LAG itself shows what cooperation among local stakeholders can move. Cooperation also helps to understand each other better, for example business and ecology, administration and stakeholders or other. Cooperation is



also an instrument with which to learn from other actors or other regions. Thus a LAG should be always open for cooperation with others, even from other countries (*transnational cooperation*).

1.4.1 Additional principle: Decentralised management and financing

The seven LEADER principles have been discussed in some detail. But of course, there is always the question of developing a programme further. In LEADER it is very significant that the financial management of the LEADER means is in the hands of the Local Action Groups. It is controlled by the paying authorities as well as by the EU itself. But the use and operational management is conducted by the LAG management. This is also specific, as is the whole LEADER approach. Lukesch introduces this important fact as principle number eight: “decentralised management and financing” in the LEADER/ ELARD conference in Minhaterra, 2018¹⁵. At the moment this feature has not yet been introduced officially as ‘principle number eight’¹⁶, but this could take place in the preparation of the next LEADER phase, and it would make sense to do so.

1.5 Format of workshop or session

Type of session	Introductory session into the seven key features of LEADER
Duration	30 - 60 min.
Content	Presentation and discussion of the key features.
Questions for discussion	Who already has experience with LEADER or the LEADER approach and can share their knowledge with their colleagues? What are your experiences regarding the bottom-up approach? What are your opinions/thoughts about this approach?
Material	Board, moderation kit, flipchart (optional).

15 Lukesch, Robert (2018): Keynote paper 4.

16 https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld/leader-toolkit/leaderclld-explained_en. Retrieved November 5th 2020.



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B. LEADER in Practice

Chapter 2: Participation in LEADER

2.1 Focus of the training

Learning objectives

The participants will be able to understand

- the importance of participation in the LEADER-context;
- how to conduct a stakeholder-analysis;
- how to involve stakeholders.

Guiding questions

Why is participation important?
What are the different levels of participation?
How to identify the 'right' stakeholders?

2.2 Stakeholder participation

Stakeholder participation is at the heart of regional development, respectively LEADER. On the one hand, people increasingly want to have more influence regarding decisions that affect their lives (they want to participate in decisions and affairs that affect them). On the other hand, local authorities and governments are also increasingly interested in involving local people. A participatory approach that allows different people in a region to raise their voice and join efforts on improving local/regional projects is an essential element of LEADER. LAG Management (or also Regional Management) plays a key role in bringing different people and actors together and creates possibilities for participation for creating jointly a better future.

An increasing demand for more participation in planning and managing development can be stated all over the world. The advantages of participation are:

- Participation empowers local people to build their communities according to their dreams and needs.
- Participation demands and increases trust between actors in a region as the setting of priorities, decision-making and the implementation of activities becomes more transparent and understandable.
- A wide range of methods has been developed in the past decades to enhance participation and empowerment of rural communities.
- The methods include new ways of communication, styles of interaction, types of flexible organisations and services, also supported by digital tool.

2.3 Levels of participation

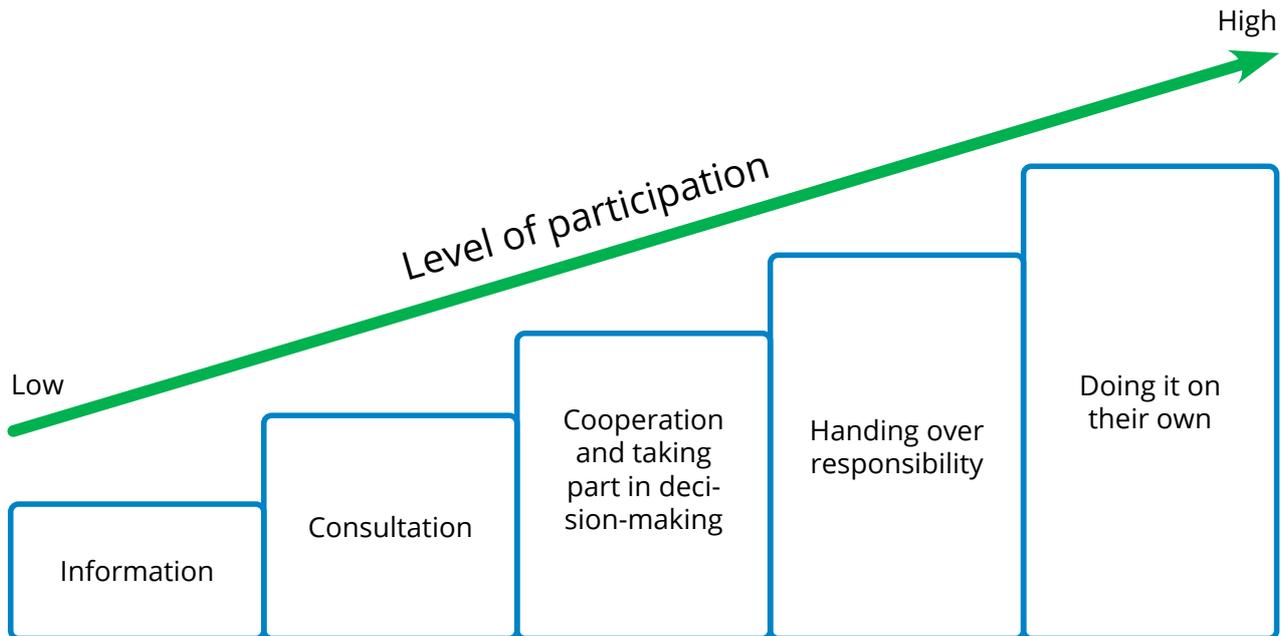


Figure 3: Levels of Participation

Participation can be understood in very different intensities and types. The forms of participation show an increase of intensity and the responsibility of stakeholders in the process.

Table 3: Levels of participation - description

Level of participation	Description
Information	The general public, local people, and other stakeholders are informed about plans and decisions by government authorities, but have no influence at this time. <i>Example: Information-event for the LEADER programme</i>
Consultation	Opinions of and feedback from stakeholders and the public concerning the project plans are requested. <i>Example: Workshop with SWOT analysis</i>
Cooperation	The stakeholders are actively involved in the implementation of policies, plans, and projects. They take part in decision-making that affects their lives and their communities. External support for planning, facilitation, and implementation is still taking place. <i>Example: Network or Local Action Group</i>
Handing over responsibilities	The decisions are made by local people and their direct representatives at the local level. They assume the responsibilities for their decisions. Higher levels of authority may accompany the decision-making processes by giving advice only. This step leads to the local/regional stakeholders themselves taking complete responsibility. <i>Example: Local Action Group</i>
Doing it on their own	Local people and their organisations have full control and decision-making power for whatever is affecting their lives in rural areas. Legally, financially, and personally (capacity wise) stakeholders handle their own affairs in a democratic and decentralised way. <i>Example: Association</i>

Mobilisation and Participation of Stakeholders

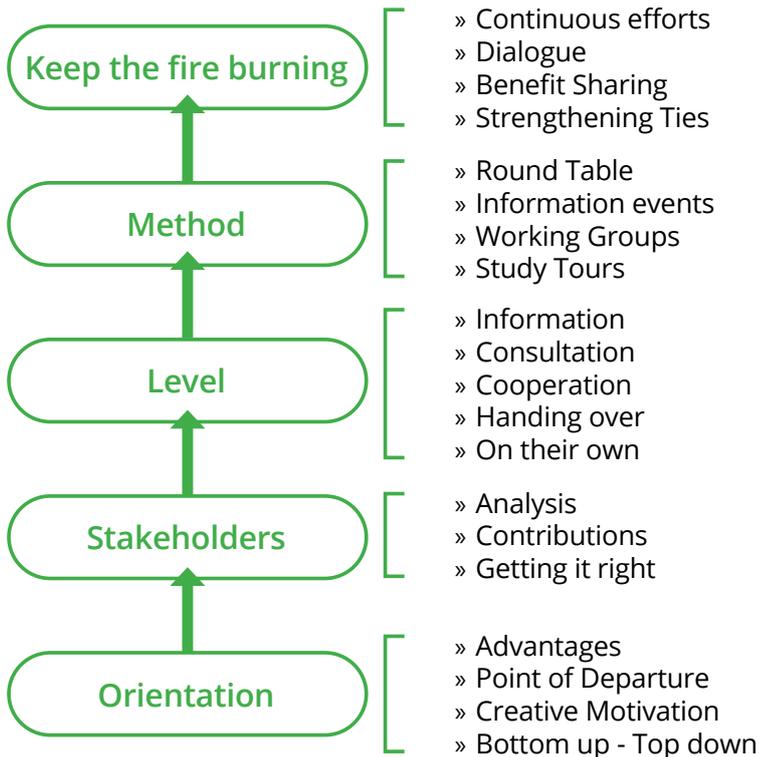


Figure 4: Mobilisation of Stakeholders

2.4 Mobilisation of stakeholders

Orientation

- Advantages of stakeholder participation

Getting involved and working together with other people offers many advantages. A group of people regularly can achieve more than an individual person can. Often, it needs to join the hands, bodies and minds of many to get things done, to build a road, to construct a dam, to establish a market, to ensure the delivery of social services.

- Point of departure

Regional development starts when individuals, decision-makers and groups from civil society, government, business and agriculture agree that something needs to be done. There are many good reasons for giving a voice to local people, community based groups, and other regional actors, for example:

- a shared vision about the desired future is created by the people themselves;
- a joint agreement on the objectives, strategy and steps is achieved;
- ownership of local change processes will be with the local people, not with outsiders, thus increasing the spirit of (co-) responsibility;
- participation generates the energy and commitment needed for successful implementation.

- Create motivation

The involvement of local people and the share of responsibility in decision-making motivates people. Also, the perspective of the implementation of projects for local needs let people engage in LEADER processes and the work of a LAG.



- **Balancing 'top-down' and 'bottom-up'**

In the past, the 'top-down' approach dominated. Today, the 'bottom-up' approach is gaining ground. 'Bottom up' does not mean that all decisions are made by local people alone. Many problems at community level cannot be solved without external support from outside the region (e.g. from a national level) such as rural infrastructure, public schooling, or health services. Only a sound combination of the 'bottom up' steering and 'top down' approach can lead to success. Participation is to the benefit of both:

- local authorities profit from the commitment, the expertise and the creativity of local people.
- local villages and municipalities, on the other hand, profit from the professionalism and assistance of local administration and policy makers.

A balanced involvement of representatives of all social groups and sectors is vital. Representatives from agriculture and local business, from policy and public administration, from village councils and civil society have to be equally involved.

Stakeholders

- **Stakeholder Analysis**

For a rural development process like LEADER, it is important to involve the right stakeholders in order to come to the best possible results. Selecting the right stakeholders depends on the type of activities. Key players from politics, public administration, economy and civil society make essential strategic decisions. Other stakeholders from the private sector and civil society are very important for operational questions. Multipliers from educational institutions and the media are also a crucial in disseminating information to other groups of people. An analysis of stakeholders and their interests gives insight into the suitable type of participation:

- Which persons (male and female), groups and institutions can support or prevent the project, or are affected by it?
- What is their interest and attitude towards the project? Interests, benefits and conflicts must be identified and discussed.
- What is their influence on the implementation of the project? Accountability, responsibility, past conduct, available resources and abilities of the male and female stakeholders must be discussed.

Stakeholder analysis can be done through facilitation of a discussion in which the participants themselves:

- Identify the organisations operating within the region, whether formal or informal.
- Discuss and understand these organisations in the region, their actions, strengths and weaknesses.
- Identify the relationships between these organisations.
- Identify the area where they are working.

- **Different contributions of stakeholders**

The different views, ideas and approaches of local and regional stakeholders mean a value of its own. Different perspectives help to get the endogenous potential and to stimulate creativity in order to develop the best solutions for a rural region. It also helps to understand the different opinions of other groups.



▪ Civil society

Associations pool the interests, attitudes and part of the knowledge of their (male and female) members. In this manner they contribute to multiple views, fruitful discussions and creativity. Civil society gives a voice and opportunity to participate to these specific groups who represent organised stakeholders. There is a need for intense public relation work towards these groups, especially information and consultation to explain and convince them that their participation is required. Thematic discussions must be given priority over commercial interests.

▪ Private economy

Businesses bring economic experience and know-how to the regional development process and may be able to contribute with regard to financing of projects. This increases the commercial benefits and competitiveness of a region, e.g. expand value chains and new jobs. There is also the option to include their own interests in the decision making processes of private sector representatives. New platforms (e.g. work teams), new contacts, new business opportunities can be offered to the LAG stakeholders.

The eLAG can also benefit from already implemented projects: e.g. better (market) up-dates through IT-communication and regional trade fairs.

▪ Decision makers at village or municipality level

The participation by community administrators improves the cross-cutting character of regional development processes. In addition, the officials often make fundamental decisions about development issues in the region. Early involvement, regular up-dates, and close contact with local authorities help the development approach.

Method: How to involve local people

The first step towards local participation can be a brainstorming session focusing on the following questions:

- Who are the social groups and key persons to be involved?
- Which policymakers do we have to include? And why?
- How can we reach other interested persons in the region?
- How can we assure that various vulnerable groups (e.g. long-term unemployed, minorities, disabled, women, etc.) get involved?
- What about the rural youth, elderly people? How can we contact them?

For the involvement of different stakeholders and with different goals here are examples of formats of specific events:



Table 4: Examples of types of events

Type of event	Description
Initial circle	A first group of promoters of the idea of LEADER and LAG can be the initial moment for a LEADER process. When this nucleus is in place, widening circles can attract and include other stakeholders. Personal talks, e.g. interviews, are a good way to make contact with people who can and will promote a project. In this manner, common interests and different expectations become apparent.
Public information events	A public meeting at the municipality or village community level can be of use to inform and sensitise the public in general about new opportunities for local people to get involved.
Regional conferences	A meeting with key stakeholders from policy, municipal administration, private business and civil society can be of use to explain and discuss with key persons the objectives of new activities in the region.
Round table meetings	Round table meetings are supposed to involve specialists from different sectors to discuss proposals for new activities. Round table meetings at municipality or village community level are important for coming up with new proposals, discussing strategic plans, etc.
Working groups	Local working groups comprised of key persons possessing an expert knowledge of the region or representing a special interest group like farmers' groups or traders. These working groups are important for developing region-specific solutions to face prevailing development barriers.
Study Tours/ Excursions	Study trips and direct information from project owners about 'good practice' examples and experiences.

Getting the right people on board

From the point of view of past experience, it can be observed that certain people play a decisive role in the success or failure of a local initiative. These can be persons, who:

- have an excellent reputation and enjoy a high standing in the region;
- are optimistic and drive the process forward even in difficult situations;
- have already gained experiences in similar local initiatives;
- are liked by others because of their pleasant and convincing personality;
- find it easy to link the region with the outside world.

These people should be involved, especially in the elaboration of the LDS, as their experience, ideas, and reputation may help the whole efforts of the LAG.

Keep the fire burning

Even when initial projects have been launched successfully, participation must be further cultivated. Throughout all phases of a LEADER process it is important that all the important interests are taken into consideration and that local people are given the opportunity to come up with their own ideas.

Establishing an 'open house', which is a location/ place where people can freely meet and discuss and be informed, is very important. It helps to ensure that the process remains transparent and possible changes or corrections can be discussed among a large group.



2.5 Format of workshop or session

2.5.1 Introduction to participation

Type of workshop	Introductory workshop
Setting	Group work
Sessions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The role of participation. 2. Methods for local mobilisation. 3. Levels of participation – information – consultation – cooperation. 4. Stakeholders with special needs and interests. 5. Keeping the fire burning and getting people 'on board'.
Objectives	<p>The following group work has the objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to educate/ready participants for different steps of a participation process; • to train participants on the different stages of participation.
Target group	<p>The example addresses the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Action Group members; • People who have the task of organising a participation local/ regional process.
Duration	Different stages / up to 3 hours.
Material	Boards, moderation kit, flipchart.



Sessions in detail:

The role of participation	<p>Ask participants to brainstorm on the questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why is stakeholder participation a crucial factor for developing a region?</i> • <i>What are the advantages? What are potential disadvantages? (or: what hinders the participation of local people?)</i> <p>Summarise the main findings in key words on a flip chart and discuss them.</p>
Levels of participation	<p>Invite participants to define the term 'participation'.</p> <p>Document their answers on a flip chart.</p> <p>Highlight what the definitions have in common, and what distinguishes one definition from the others?</p> <p>Attach the definitions to levels of participation. Make sure the following levels are included: (a) Information, (b) Consultation, (c) Cooperation, (d) Handing over responsibilities, (e) Doing it on their own.</p> <p>Encourage participants to draw a graph or a picture which symbolises best the different levels of participation.</p>
Stakeholder with special needs and interests	<p>Ask participants to form small groups ('buzz groups') of two to three persons to sit together and discuss the question below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Who are the stakeholders to be involved in Regional Development processes? (here it is helpful to have a specific region in mind)</i> <p>Give each buzz group three cards to write down their ideas on (large enough for all to see).</p> <p>Cluster the cards into similar categories of stakeholders.</p> <p>Post a suitable notice board on the wall, or on a pin board showing six different groups of stakeholder.</p> <p>In the plenary session, invite participants to add the missing stakeholders.</p> <p>Afterwards, request participants to form six groups (according to the six groups of stakeholders).</p> <p>Each one is supposed to work on the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are the positive aspects of each of those stakeholders with regard to participation in rural economic development processes?</i> • <i>What is difficult about the stakeholders under discussion?</i> • <i>What are the options for making sure each stakeholder contributes best?</i> <p>Ask a representative of each group to present their findings in a creative way.</p>
Keeping the fire burning	<p>Invite four volunteers to become 'owners of a strategy for enhancing regional participation'.</p> <p>Ask the remaining participants to become 'consultants on matters for participation' and join one of the four groups of 'participation strategy owners'.</p> <p>Each of the four groups (one 'owner' and several 'consultants') are supposed to design a comprehensive participation strategy considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What about the approach (objectives, levels of participation, methods, stakeholders, expected results) of such a participation strategy?</i> • <i>How relevant are the points for our daily project work?</i> <p>Present the results in the plenary session and discuss the elaborated suggestions.</p>



Remarks:

Other events should be held on a regular basis such as field days where issues in the rural countryside can be shown, market stands with posters on projects and plans, and excursions to other communities. It is important that people are invited to cooperate and contribute. Thus, it makes clear that a regional development or LEADER process is not only the job of a few dedicated people and groups, in fact, quite the opposite. It gains value and drive from the participation of as many people as possible. Last but not least, rural development should be fun. Many regions organise village festivals, barbecues, and parties to celebrate what they have achieved together.

All these efforts have to be accompanied by public relations with different media, e.g. newspaper, radio, social media, internet etc. to inform the public about projects, schedules, events, and other important information for the region. It is also helpful to be transparent and give the opportunity to the stakeholders and interested public to inform and contribute with comments or suggestions.

2.5.2 Stakeholder analysis

Type of session	Method/ Group Work
Duration	45 - 90 min.
Content	Input, exchange and discussion of participation.
Questions for discussion	1. Please identify potential LAG stakeholders by using the given matrix. 2. Please discuss how the stakeholders can be mobilised / motivated.
Material	Board, moderation kit, flipchart

Table 5: Stakeholder analysis matrix (Example)

Name of Stakeholder	Contact	Impact	Influence	What is important	Contribution to the project	How to mobilise
<i>Eco-Initiative</i>	<i>Speaker of initiative.</i>	<i>Concept for clean water supply.</i>	<i>Fight for clean water.</i>	<i>International network.</i>	<i>Ideas for water project.</i>	<i>Workshop.</i>
<i>Farmers association</i>	<i>Head of assoc. (Mr. Miller)</i>	<i>Needed as a partner project in finding implementation.</i>	<i>Many families create in-come with agricultural products.</i>	<i>Respect availability of farmers (i.e. NOT during harvest time).</i>	<i>Expertise of regional products.</i>	<i>Direct contact.</i>

Table can be enlarged with further stakeholders.



2.6 Material

2.6.1 Checklist for stakeholder analysis

Stakeholder categories and examples to be addressed in the specific region (to be completed).

Table 6: Checklist for stakeholder analysis

Category	Stakeholder	already addressed ✓
Civil society (groups and institutions)	• Farmers' association/union	
	• Youth organisations	
	• Women's associations	
	• Social or charity clubs	
	• Religious organisations	
	• Environmental groups	
Education and consulting	• Vocational training centres	
	• Colleges and universities	
	• Schools	
	• Adult education centres	
	• Other qualifying institutions (including consulting institutions/companies)	
Economy/ private sector	• Commercial banks and micro-finance institutions	
	• Small business associations	
	• Business incubators	
	• Chambers of commerce	
	• Trade associations, tourism boards	
	• Enterprises in relevant industries	
Development organisations	• Public economic development agencies	
	• Regional management	
	• Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)	
Governmental units	• Government agricultural and forestry offices	
	• Government environmental agencies	
	• Office for land management	
	• Public utilities: city works, waterworks, etc.	
Political representatives	• Municipality mayors	
	• Members of the municipality council	
	• Members of the village council and the village leaders	
	• ?	

Further categories and stakeholders can be added according to the individual needs of the LAG.



2.7 References

European Network for Rural Development
https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld_en
Retrieved: November 7th 2020



Chapter 3: Local Action Groups and LAG Management

3.1 Focus of the training

Learning objectives

The participants will be able to understand:

- the purpose of a LAG;
- the structure of a LAG;
- the tasks of a LAG management.

Guiding questions

What is the purpose of a LAG?

How is a LAG organised?

What is specific or what is the added value of a LAG?

3.2 Local Action Group (LAG)

The Local Action Group can be seen as a unique element of LEADER or as the core of the LEADER programme. But what is a 'Local Action Group'? In general, a Local Action Group is a group of people from private and public sectors in a specific rural area that want to develop their home region in a cooperative way. Some functions are essential and characterise a LAG. Compared to other EU programmes, the LAG has specific tasks which give the LEADER programme a surplus for the rural stakeholders. The LAG:

- is the owner and developer of the local / regional development strategy in a region;
- is responsible for the implementation of the strategy;
- is the link between project-owners and the administration/ financing authority;
- selects and prioritises projects to be applied for financial means/ to be implemented;
- is the networking platform for activities, stakeholders, and initiatives in a region;
- does not implement projects and has no budget for projects. Only in exceptional cases does the LAG implement a project on its own.

EU legislation sets out the following criteria for LAGs as organisations through national managing authorities¹⁷:

.....
¹⁷ <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/leader/leader-tool-kit/the-local-action-group/what-are-the-basic-requirements-for-a-lag>



Table 7: Criteria for LAGs

Criterion	Description
The area defined	The operational area of the LAG must be defined in a clear and binding manner in the LAG statutes and strategy. The area of the LAG does not necessarily have to follow administrative borders. Each area can only belong to one LAG.
Sufficient resources	The definition of the area of the LAG must show that it has sufficient financial and human resources. The LEADER measures must be targeted on rural areas.
Competent actor	The LAG is open to all interested actors of the area. They must have the opportunity to become LAG members. The statutes cannot exclude certain actors. There must be a sufficiently large and extensive number of members in the LAG. The members must include representatives of public administration, entrepreneurs, communities and local people. The LAG must be a competent actor (a registered association, etc.).
Public-private principle	Decision-making rules of the Board must follow the public-private partnership principle where predominance is given to the private sector. At least 50% of the members and 50% of the votes must come from the private sector. This principle must be also written in the LAG statutes. The 50/50 composition of members respectively board members ensures that decisions, about projects for example, are not led mainly by the interests of local politicians or administration. It also makes the decision-process more transparent and equal.
Skills to administrate funds	The LAG must show in its statutes and strategy how it will organise itself internally and acquire the sufficient economic and administrative skills required to administrate public funds.

The principle of subsidiarity¹⁸

The construction of a LAG is the expression of the principle of subsidiarity. Subsidiarity is an organising principle which says that decisions are best made at the lowest possible level of government or an organisation and that political power should be exercised by the smallest, lowest or least centralised competent authority. Subsidiarity means: to manage the challenges or problems on the level where they appear. Only in that case when a (administrative) level is no longer able to solve a problem (reasons can be, for example, a lack of resources or knowledge) the next higher level will be responsible. The principle of subsidiarity empowers local communities and stakeholders because they are directly involved in solution finding and decision making. It helps to avoid unrealistic solutions, decided far away from the municipalities, which never meet the needs of people. Subsidiarity is, ideally, one of the features of federalism.

3.3 The LAG management

For a successful implementation of LEADER, a functioning LAG management is necessary. It works on the operational level and implements the decisions of the members and the LAG board. The form how¹⁹ it is organised and the tasks and functions to be fulfilled are related to the specific needs of the region and have to be decided by the LAG. Below are some examples of what a LAG coordinator (or LAG manager) does:

- Advisory for project-owners and initiatives, reporting and moderation.

¹⁸ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/7/the-principle-of-subsidiarity>

¹⁹ Often a LAG-management is closely linked to the administration. But it can also be an association or a limited company or other.



- Support of working groups.
- Preparation of the project selection procedures of the LAG.
- Guiding the elaboration of a LDS.
- Monitoring of the implementation of the LDS.
- Contact person for donors and investors.
- Public relations for the LAG.

In most of the cases in the EU, the LAG management has a coordinator and secretary if not additional project-financed specific staff.

The financing of the LAG management is a crucial question for a LAG. In the EU, several means of the LEADER budget are saved for the LAG management. In most cases the financing of the LAG management is from both public and private means.

3.4 Format of workshop or session

Type of session	Exercise, group work
Duration	30 - 60 min.
Content	LAG / LAG Management
Questions for discussion	<p>1. What has to be considered when setting-up a LAG management?</p> <p>2. What do we / should we expect from a LAG manager: competences, education, etc....?</p>
Material	Board, moderation kit, flipchart (optional).



3.5 References

European Network for Rural Development
https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld_en
Retrieved: Novemberth 2020

European Parliament (2020): The Principle of Subsidiarity.
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/7/the-principle-of-subsidiarity>
Retrieved: 7th November 2020



Chapter 4: Local Development Strategy

4.1 Focus of the training

Learning objectives

The participants will be able to understand:

- the function of a Local Development Strategy (LDS);
- the structure and content of the LDS;
- how an elaboration process of a local/rural development strategy can be organised.

Guiding questions

How is a LDS structured?

What are the important features of a LDS?

How is the elaboration process of a LDS organised?

4.2 Elaboration of a LDS

The elaboration of a Local Development Strategy is a crucial process for a LAG. It bundles the regional development activities, initiatives, and projects and involves local stakeholders in strategic planning and concrete project implementation. In this process and the resulting strategy, the seven LEADER key features are essential. Although the LDS development is focused on LEADER the elaboration process can be an example for other strategies. For a Local Development Strategy is no single 'one size fits all' model exists. It has to be elaborated upon individually.

4.3 Legal framework for the elaboration of a LDS within LEADER

As a community-led local development initiative, LEADER is an integrated development process designed to engage, enable, resource, and empower local communities in undertaking their own local development. There are three common and interlinked elements thought to be fundamental to community-led local development approaches, which underpin the seven elements of the LEADER approach. The three elements (the 'trinity of local territorial development') are:

- the area or territory;
- the partnership and;
- the integrated Local Development Strategy.

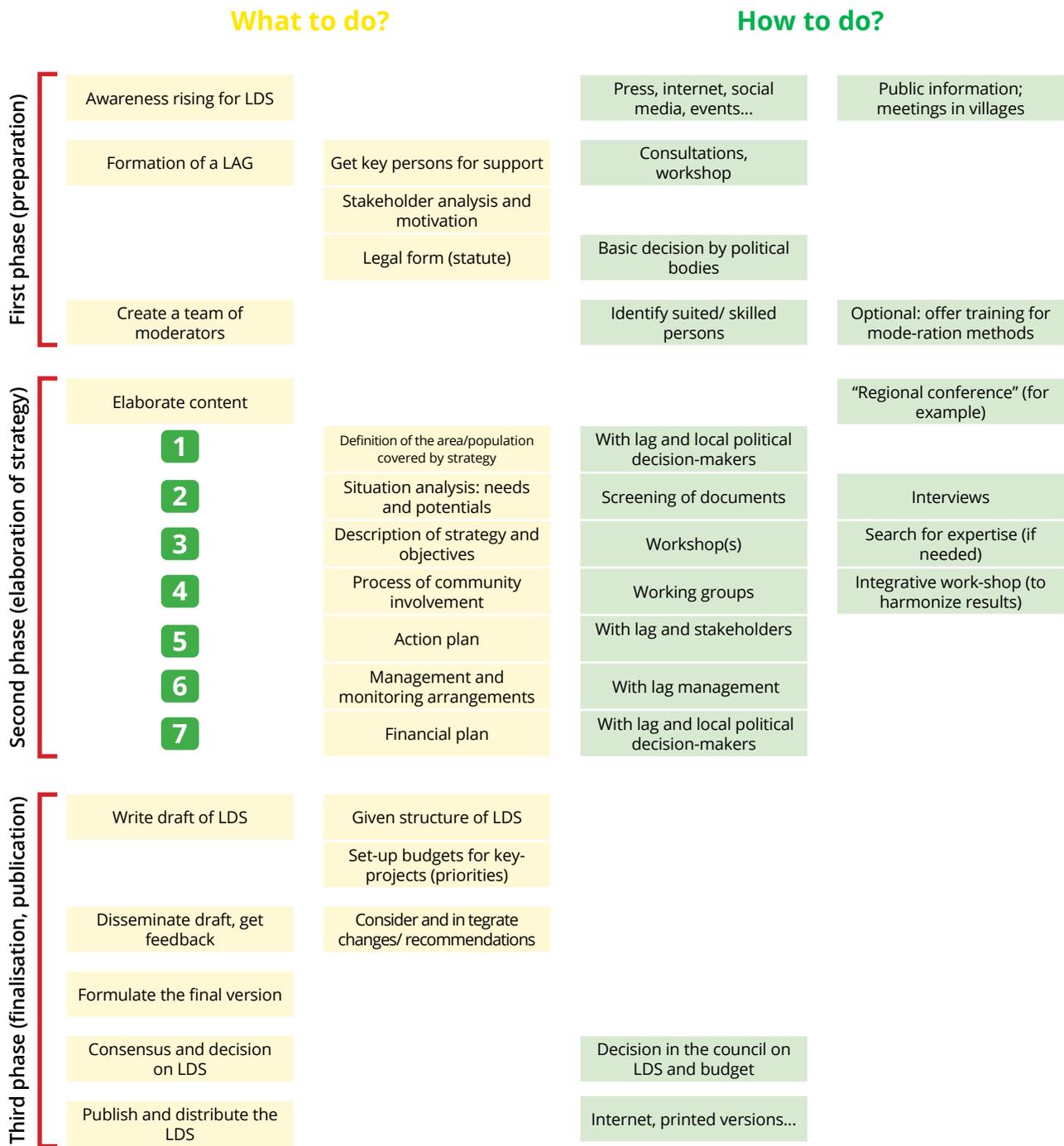
EU regulations on the Local Development Strategy

The common minimum content for a Local Development Strategy (LDS) under any of the EU structural funds is set out in the EU regulation 1303/2013, Article 33²⁰. The content of a LDS is basically laid down in the EU guidelines for the implementation of LEADER.

.....
20 <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/regulation-eu-no-13032013-european-parliament-and-council>



Figure 5: Local Development Strategy - Elaboration process



The following table gives an overview of the content of a LDS, which again needs to be adjusted to the respective guidelines at the national level. Some managing authorities provide a template for the document, which is more or less obligatory to follow. The minimum content of a Local Development Strategy (following EU LEADER, actual programme period 2014-2020):



Table 8: Overview LDS

LDS-Chapter	Description
1.	A definition of the area and population covered by the strategy.
2.	An analysis of the development needs and potential of the area including an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT).
3.	A description of the strategy and its objectives , a description of the integrated and innovative character of the strategy and a hierarchy of objectives, including clear and measurable targets for outputs or results. The strategy shall be coherent with the relevant programmes of all the CSF (Common Strategic Format work) funds involved.
4.	A description of the process of community involvement in the development of the strategy.
5.	An action plan demonstrating how objectives are translated into actions.
6.	A description of the management and monitoring arrangements of the strategy demonstrating the capacity of the Local Action Group to implement the strategy and a description of the specific arrangements for evaluation.
7.	The financial plan of the strategy including the planned allocation of each of the CSF funds.

Minimum content means that the content of the LDS structure (*above*) is obligatory, but according to the needs of a specific region more chapters or sub-chapters can be added and shifted within the strategy.

4.4 How to elaborate a participatory LDS

The process of the elaboration of a LDS does not follow a standardised concept although the strategy has its defined chapters. It can be based on guidelines regarding the time format and some of the steps to be taken. Experience shows that the elaboration of a LDS takes approximately six to twelve months, and three phases within the process can be defined as follows:

- The **first** phase (preparation phase) is dedicated to the information of the stakeholders trying to get a clear mandate for the elaboration of a LDS and convincing the political and the administrative level of the benefits of the LEADER approach and enhancing the participation of the private sector and the civil society.
- The **second** phase (elaboration of the LDS) is dedicated to intensive consultation and discussion on the content of the strategy and the organisational setup for its implementation with the founding of a Local Action Group (steps 1-7).
- The **third** phase (finalisation and publication) addresses consultations on the written documents and gaining agreement on the financial contributions of the stakeholders for the implementation of the strategy.

The methodology for the process needs to be adjusted to the individual situation of each region and depends very much on the experience of the stakeholders in cooperation and the LEADER approach in general. It will be much easier to elaborate a LDS for an already experienced and well established LAG than for a new LAG.

Getting Started: Start early with raising awareness

One of the most important factors was to stress the importance of LAGs taking the initiative and starting the process of LDS development. Initiating the process of LDS development is often best done by establishing a steering group or team, if a LAG does not yet exist. In the case of



new LEADER regions the steering group may well evolve to form the basis of a LAG. The steering group can be small with only two or three key partners, but should progressively evolve and be broadened e.g. as a result of conducting a mapping and analysis of local stakeholders.

This can be conducted in the initial phase and refined at a later stage in the LDS process. This group will be involved in coordinating the necessary research, planning and steering the process of community engagement and establishing and securing the human and other resources required. An effective and well-planned participative process of preparing the LDS can contribute considerably to the development of a representative, well-informed and credible LAG capable of managing and delivering the LDS.

Formation of a Local Action Group

The preparation of the LDS and the development of the local partnership effectively go hand in hand each contributing to the other. As people are identified to contribute to the LDS the partnership is likely to evolve through their subsequent involvement. Drawing directly on this vital resource of local knowledge and awareness and engaging local people, businesses and organisations directly in the work of the LAG help to ensure the local relevance of the LDS and build commitment to the LEADER process. From the shared understanding of the area's main problems and their causes, together with the assets, needs and opportunities presented, a common vision and objective can be developed, strengthening in turn the community's recognition, involvement, and ownership of the LDS and LAG.

Conducting a stakeholder analysis is one simple way of structuring and ensuring effective wider participation in LDS development whilst also contributing to constructing a relevant and capable LAG partnership. It may be undertaken by sector, public, private and civic with regard to area, theme or activity type (see chapter 2).

Create a team of moderators

The LDS process will involve an intense sequence of meetings and discussions with communities and other stakeholders. This requires good quality animation and facilitation skills. The small steering team may not have the time, knowledge or skills required for the range of tasks ahead, and partners may not be able to commit sufficient staff resources. Additional dedicated resources e.g. from a university or other may be necessary to support the team in specific, technical or specialised tasks. Skilled external experts may also offer benefits in their objectivity and in acting as honest brokers. If the resources for moderation in a region are not sufficient, some kind of moderation training would make sense. Trained moderators are also available to moderate any type of participation of citizens or other. Such courses are offered by many organisations.

Starting the elaboration process

In deciding how to consult locally LAGs and their working, groups should consider how best to structure this. Important considerations include how people will be involved, on what basis, at what stage, through what type of approach and how this will be resourced. In considering this, the group needs to think through the stages of LDS development and the objectives in involving local partners and communities. This includes the main stages of preparing the LDS, information gathering, SWOT analysis, prioritisation, setting objectives and the basic intervention logic, designing delivery, securing support, and agreeing on the final submission.

Broad based community participation is a priority in strengthening the relevance, appropriateness, ownership, and deliverability of the LAG, LDS, and the outcomes sought. LAGs have to motivate and enable real participation, merely informing local people that they can contribute to the development of an LDS and a bid for funding for their area is not enough. You have to plan whose involvement you seek and how you enable this. Ensure that the process is as inclusive as is feasible, avoid excluding groups e.g. the young or elderly who may face difficulties e.g. in travelling, those with time constraints, businesses, young parents, etc.



Public meetings of various formats are a common approach, but planning should ensure that all parts of the area and community have the opportunity to contribute. Care, therefore, needs to be taken to address potential barriers e.g. in managing timing and locations, providing food and refreshments, even providing child care arrangements to ensure people can attend. Care is also needed in the design of working methods to enable even the most reticent to be comfortable in making their contribution. There are many web-based resources on participative techniques, simple ones like buzz groups, prioritisation exercises, and the way in which facilitators gather feedback all can help involve people.

Once this wider basis of involvement is established it is important to communicate effectively, provide feedback, keep people informed and engaged throughout the processes to ensure a high level of local participation by all possible interested parties.

Thematic Working groups

Thematic, sectorial or area based working groups are a further means of broadening, extending, and deepening both the participative and consultative process and addressing specific needs or priorities. It is important that these groups connect and communicate strongly with the main LDS working group. The choice and number of themes for such groups depends on the area, the resources available and the initial territorial analysis. Groups may also form a means of involving disadvantaged or hard to reach groups or to allow the use of methods which make it easier for people to participate.

Considering the composition of these groups is important to ensure that they work effectively. The aim is to involve a broad cross-section of motivated local people who have ideas. Care should be taken to consider the relationships or dynamics within communities e.g. by selecting chairs who are trusted or respected in the community or in avoiding so called 'blockers', those whose involvement or actions may exclude others, and to involve groups that are often excluded. Such groups bring together different stakeholder perspectives and allow the exploration and agreement of the main needs and opportunities and their relative priority. In so doing, the groups contribute to the preparation of the SWOT and further LDS development overall and in the identification of thematic or area based objectives and priorities.

Information sources

An immediate task for the LDS working group is the preliminary analysis of relevant data and other information sources in the development of the profile of the area and the LDS itself. At this stage the group will be primarily concerned with secondary sources, judging what is relevant and valuable and making the most of existing information rather than duplicating the effort or undertaking new research. Therefore, the crucial questions are: What information do we need? Where do we get this information? What documents/ concepts/ plans, etc. already exist? Useful for the LDS is information on the territory, its geography and environment, resource efficiency, heritage, climate change, transport, infrastructure, population, social inclusion and poverty, the economy and labour market, governance and administration. This provides a basis around which the working group's analysis and initial thinking about possible priorities for the LDS can take place. This is an important step in informing subsequent community consultations.

SWOT analysis

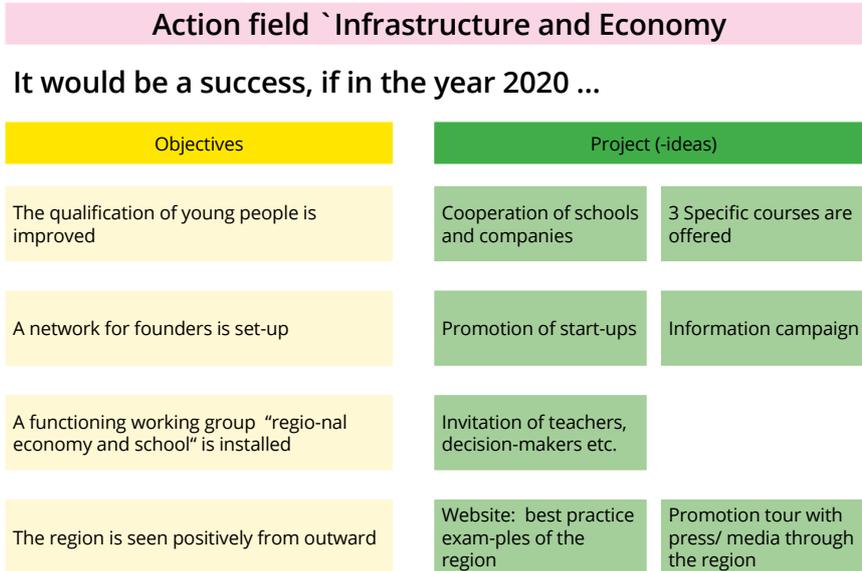
Preparing a LDS will normally involve LAGs and/or other local actors carrying out an analysis of the situation in their territory, commonly this is based on a SWOT analysis. This analysis will identify the development challenges and opportunities, and from this the strategy and its objectives may be defined and the development priorities agreed. LAGs may be supported in this process e.g. through partner resources or by experts. The resultant output is an LDS which addresses a well-defined local area, is integrated, and which takes account of the range of local stakeholders' concerns. Groups may conduct their own SWOT analysis of the theme, area or sector in question. Conventionally, strengths and weaknesses are regarded as being *internal* factors i.e. things over which the LAG has some influence whilst opportunities and threats are



regarded as *external* factors that the LAG may seek to mitigate or take advantage of. Developing a clear understanding is important in ensuring that the LDS is focused on realistic and locally achievable objectives.

Developing priorities and objectives

Figure 6: Real example of objectives and ideas in the action field infrastructure and economy



On the basis of the research and analysis undertaken, the working groups should consider how to build on the strengths and mitigate the threats, address the needs and opportunities highlighted and identify the possible actions. Encouraging the group to consider their 'vision', what the area may become or look like in future is a particularly valuable technique. This then has to be translated into something more realistic and deliverable, real SMART objectives²¹. In thinking about what is achievable it is useful to consider what the potential level of available resources is likely to be and what is best addressed through this LAG and what by other programmes. This is the next level of reality checking and also contributes importantly to 'expectation management' and prioritisation. In general, objectives should be ranked reflecting the degree to which they contribute towards meeting the fundamental needs and opportunities identified earlier, their share of the proposed budget should reflect this priority.

potential level of available resources is likely to be and what is best addressed through this LAG and what by other programmes. This is the next level of reality checking and also contributes importantly to 'expectation management' and prioritisation. In general, objectives should be ranked reflecting the degree to which they contribute towards meeting the fundamental needs and opportunities identified earlier, their share of the proposed budget should reflect this priority.

Drafting and Feedback

Once all data regarding document screening, interviews, workshops and other sources are gathered, a first draft of the LDS has to be worked out and a near final version developed. This version has to be sent to the other stakeholders in order to keep the results of the process transparent and to give the opportunity to comment on it or to give some more ideas. From experience there will not come so much new ideas or comments. After getting these contributions, they are integrated into draft.

Completing the process: joining it all up

As a next step, the draft has to be finalised and to be sent to the relevant decision-makers for discussion and accepting this LDS as the officially new Local Development Strategy for the region and/ or LAG. The objective here is to draw the elements together and build consensus through a process of meetings and negotiations agreeing the main principles, objectives and priorities of the LDS along with proposed budget allocation and the final composition and structure of the LAG partnership. LAGs are therefore seeking to draw together different perspectives, visions and aspirations into a single and agreed LDS.

This can be rather a delicate process and is not merely a case of bringing together the different parts from the different stages and groups. Here the maxim of 'the whole being greater than the sum of the parts' should truly apply. The LAG or steering group need to provide strong leadership here to encourage real and constructive compromise in identifying the links (synergies or complementarity) between actions and actors and developing shared 'win-win' approaches. Normally this involves starting with those actions and projects where there is agreement and

.....
 21 Objectives are SMART when they are *Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic* and *Time-bound*



then building on this. LAGs are likely to have to set aside or defer those elements which represent red lines for one or more of the local partners or stakeholders.

Maintaining and building on the momentum of participation energises the implementation process. It is therefore particularly important to find projects which deliver quick results and flagship projects with strong local effects or which contribute strongly to the objectives of the LDS. High priority should be given to those projects or actions which mobilise different local actors.

There is a wide range of experience of this type of negotiation both within the LEADER community and elsewhere in conducting these types of approach. LAGs should actively seek out and implement proven effective methods. Throughout all this work the LAG or steering group has to keep one eye on the technical part of the process, preparing the LDS in the final form which will be submitted as the application for LEADER support and developing the operational plan through which it will be implemented.

4.5 Format of workshop or session

4.5.1 Situation analysis

Another method for analysing an area for the LDS is the situation analysis which could be done alternatively for a SWOT.

Type of session	Methodological exercise
Setting	Group work
Duration	45 - 90 min.
Content	Analysis of the situation in a region or LAG.
Questions for discussion	<p>What are the promoting and hindering factors in the development of your region in the fields of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participation of local actors; - elaboration and implementation of a local/ regional development strategy; - management structures?
Material	Board, moderation kit, flipchart.



4.5.2 Elaboration of a LDS

Type of session	<p>Workshop / Group Work</p> <p>This group work is designed for up to five parallel working groups, each with three to five members, ideally from the same region. Each group works on one aspect ('field') of the task. If there are less than five groups different aspects can be combined to be worked on.</p> <p>Hint: Visualise the guiding question for each group (in this example: five copies) with its specific task so that for every participant it is clear what the task is.</p>
Duration	<p>Training on elaboration of a LDS should include the following contents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandate and justification for the elaboration of a LDS. • Structure and content of a LDS. • Participatory elaboration of a LDS. <p>The module helps to understand and to work on a Local Development Strategy. For this theoretical input combined with group work minimum one day is needed. It would make sense to present and discuss also LDS examples from the context. This would mean a total time format of one-and-a-half days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory phase (explanation of the task, composition of the groups): 15 minutes. • Working phase: discussion and visualisation in the group: 45 minutes. • Preparation phase for group presentation: 15 minutes. • Presentation phase: maximum seven to ten minutes per group. <p>(Total: 85-100 minutes for the whole group work)</p> <p>If necessary, the working phase can be extended to a maximum 60 minutes. If time permits, a break of 15 minutes could divide the preparation phase from the presentation phase.</p>
Content	Elaboration of a LDS
Target group and objectives	<p>The following group work has the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to analyse the process and implementation of a LDS in a specific region; • to identify factors of improvement in a possible review of the strategy; <p>The example addresses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interested local stakeholders who are involved in the elaboration of a LDS; • Local Action Group members; • representatives of municipal administration, who are concerned with LDS.
Questions for discussion	<p>For LAG's with an existing LDS strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss what was good and what has to be improved in a review of the strategy? <p>For those with no strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your experiences with the LDS? Discuss the following aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - elaboration process. - objectives: are they still valuable? - project implementation. - budgets.
Material	Board, moderation kit, flipchart.



Step 1: Visualise the following guiding question and instruction on a flipchart:

With regard to the Local Development Strategy of your region / LAG: Please, give an overview on the following elements:

1. *Delineation and short description of the area(s) / region.*
2. *Mandate and justification for the elaboration of a LDS origin / context / existing legal format work / existing plans, programmes, concepts.*
3. *Stakeholder participation decision-making structures / organisational set-up for elaboration.*
4. *Process design and expected outputs steps undertaken until now/main contents and issues.*
5. *Assessment of the process undertaken so far (SWOT).*

Please discuss and answer the question. Prepare a presentation and present the result in the plenary session.

Ask the participants whether they understood the task. If not: explain it again.

Step 2: Group creation and selection of aspect: The participants write their name on a card and pin it on a board under one of the five (visualised) single aspects.

Step 3: SWOT analysis

For the elaboration of a SWOT, first a rural region or LAG has to be selected.

Then it has to be decided whether the SWOT concerns itself about the region in general or is focusing on a particular aspect, such as the 'environment'.

Create a four-field-board with a table, similar to this::

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

If more space is needed, then two boards can be used.

1. Step: Strengths and Weaknesses.

The participants now discuss and write their findings on cards. Then they put the cards in the respective fields on the board.

2. Step: Discuss the results shortly in the plenary session.

After this the group members go back to their old groups.

3. Step: Opportunities and Threats.

The participants now discuss and write their findings on cards. Then they put the cards in the respective fields on the board.

4. Step: Discuss the results in the plenary session.

The participants discuss the results of the SWOT analysis and draw conclusions.

Possible Follow-up: Elaboration of an event management plan (see chapter 9).



4.6 References

European Commission (2014): Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council

<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/regulation-eu-no-13032013-european-parliament-and-council>

Retrieved: 7th November 2020



Chapter 5: Projects in LEADER

5.1. Focus of the training

Learning objectives

The participants will be able to understand:

- the specifics of a LEADER project;
- the selection process for a LEADER project;
- selection criteria for regional projects.

Guiding questions

How are LEADER projects characterised?

How are LEADER projects identified?

How is the selection process organised?

5.2 Financing of projects in LEADER

The LEADER programme supports rural projects according to the LEADER rules. In most cases the share of the project's costs from LEADER is 50% of the total amount. The rest is co-financed by other sources, but the project owner has to cover a minimum of 10%. The LEADER share can be increased by 10% percent for cooperation projects and even more, if a project is transnational. In the LEADER countries there are also further specific rules for financial support by LEADER which can be found in the specific rulebooks or operational programmes. Projects in LEADER have to fulfil the LEADER requirements with regard to the seven principles.

5.3 Identification of projects

LAG management plays an important role in finding and developing LEADER projects. The LAG management has, besides many other tasks, the task of advising possible project owners in order to make their project ideas feasible in the LEADER programme (preparation phase). The LAG management is the contact point to which interested stakeholders can come with their ideas at any time as long as LEADER means are available. The management will support the project owners but will also have a critical view on project ideas with regard to feasibility, financing, planning, and implementation.

In a dialogue with the project owners, the project will be developed individually step by step and the LAG management helps in all questions of bureaucracy, financing, and so on. Another opportunity is the initiation of explicit project calls for the LAG region.

Amongst other things, it is also the task of the LAG management to consult the stakeholders in the LAG region with regard to their project ideas. The LAG management helps to develop the ideas in order to reach LEADER means and co-financing. Project owners are often very enthusiastic about their project (idea). That means that the LAG management also has the task of being a filter and to critically ask whether the planned project will have a real chance of implementation or getting into the LEADER programme. The following selection of questions addressed to project owners will help to fulfil this important function (see 6.5.1 list of questions to project owners).

5.4 Project selection

5.4.1 Selection criteria of rural projects

The following selection of criteria and the related questions may help as examples to define suitable projects in a region or LAG. The list is not complete and specific criteria according to the regions situation may be added to the list. Some of the criteria also fulfil sustainable conditions.

Table 9: Possible selection criteria of rural projects

Criterion	Questions
Regional character of the project	Does the project support the region in the long run? Are the resources for project planning and implementation from the region?
Promotion of regional identity	Is regional identity supported? How?
Project is an innovation for the region	Is the project absolutely new in the region or has it already been done several times previously? Does it bring in new/innovative ideas, methods or instruments?
Cooperation within the region	How far will there be cooperation within the region in preparation and implementation of the project?
Cooperation with other regions	Is cooperation with other regions (e. g. CBC) planned? What will such cooperation look like?
Creation or promotion of a USP	Is the project or the product specific or typical for the region? Does it have a USP?
Collaboration of different sectors	How far do different sectors (e. g. agriculture, social sector, environmental protection etc.) work together? Does the project have a cross-cutting element (going beyond one sector only)?
Use of endogenous potential of the LAG	Is the endogenous potential of the region used or strengthened by the project?
Support of networks in the region and improvement of networking in the LAG	How far are local / regional stakeholders involved in the project? Are existing networks and / or is the LAG involved? How? To what extent?
Ownership	Do local / regional stakeholders take the project to be their own one? And can it continue in the long run without depending only external resources and support?

Further criteria can be added optionally.

5.4.2 Selection of projects in the LAG

It is unique and a specific characteristic of a LAG is that it can select its own projects and not have them selected on its behalf by some other institution. It is important to know that the LAG decision board, which is elected by the members of the LAG, decides about the projects. The LAG boards have to have a majority of 51% of non-governmental and non-political members, 49% are allowed to represent these groups. In the decision about financing of projects with LEADER means, those members are excluded from voting who have or might have a personal/ financial interest in the project. Therefore, clear rules are set out and a frame has to be considered. A real example for selection criteria can be found in chapter 6.5.2.

5.5 Format of workshop or session

Type of session	Group work
Duration	30 - 60 min.
Content	Learning about project selection.
Questions for discussion	<p>You are LAG manager and a project owner is coming to your office to apply for LEADER means.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What questions do you ask the project owner? • In general: what are the criteria for (LEADER) projects of which a rural region profits?
Material	Board, moderation kit, flipchart.

5.6 Material

5.6.1 List of questions to a project owner or initiator

Table 10: List of questions to a project owner or initiator (example)

Topic	Questions
Description of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the project about? Please briefly describe it. (e.g. describe it on a maximum of two A4 pages). • What is the goal of the project? • What are milestones of the project? • To what extent is the project innovative for the region?
Benefit for the LAG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the project be implemented in the LAG area and / or how does the area benefit from the project? (If not, it can not be taken). • Discuss the benefits?
Owner of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the project owner? • Who are project partners? • Does he / she have the capacities to implement the project?
Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the co-financing (of the LEADER means) organised? • Can the project owner guarantee a share of 10% financial contribution to the total project costs?²²

Further questions can be added to this list according to the specific need for information.

²² 10% of total project costs is the minimum share which the project owner has to obligatorily contribute.



5.6.2 Criteria for the selection of projects²³

Table 11: Criteria for the selection of projects

Name of the project

(O) = obligatory criterion, (A) = additional criterion of LAG

Each of these criteria (O and A) has to be used. For each criterion, a minimum one point has to be scored.

1 Accordance with the goals of the LDS (O)		scored points
(DG = Development Goal, P = Priorities)		
<i>0 points: no Contribution for the goals of the LDS</i>	<i>2 points: Contribution for 2 AGs in different DGs</i>	
<i>1 point: Contribution for 1 priority</i>	<i>3 points: Contribution for 3 priorities in different DG's</i>	
No. of Action Goal(s) and rationale for scoring of points:		
2 Benefit for the LAG area (O)		scored points
<i>0 points: no or nearly no benefit</i>	<i>2 points: regional importance/ benefit for more</i>	
<i>1 point: local importance/ benefit for individuals</i>	<i>3 points: interregional importance/ benefit beyond LAG</i>	
Rationale for scoring of points:		
3 Contribution for environment (O)		scored points
<i>0 points: negative contribution for environment</i>	<i>2 points: indirect positive contribution</i>	
<i>1 points: neutral contribution for environment</i>	<i>3 points: direct positive contribution</i>	
Rationale for scoring of points:		
4 Level of Innovation (P)		scored points
<i>0 points: no innovation visible</i>	<i>2 points: regional innovative approach</i>	
<i>1 point: local innovative approach</i>	<i>3 points: interregional innovative approach</i>	
Rationale for scoring of points:		
5 Grade of participation of stakeholders/ citizens (O)		scored points
<i>0 points: no participation visible</i>	<i>2 points: important groups are involved</i>	
<i>1 point: visible at single points</i>	<i>3 points: widespread counselling</i>	
Rationale for scoring of points:		
6 Grade of networking and cooperation (O)		scored points
<i>0 points: no networking / cooperation visible</i>	<i>2 points: coordination in important topics</i>	
<i>1 point: visible at single points</i>	<i>3 points: exemplary networking / cooperation</i>	
Rationale for scoring of points:		

.....
23 Example from the German LAG 'Oberallgäu'.



7 Referring to Demography (O)		scored points
<i>0 points: negative contribution</i>	<i>2 points: indirect positive contribution</i>	
<i>1 point: neutral contribution</i>	<i>3 points: direct positive contribution</i>	
Rationale for scoring of points:		

8 Contribution to minimizing the climate change / Adaptation of its effects (O)		scored points
<i>0 points: negative contribution</i>	<i>2 points: indirect positive contribution</i>	
<i>1 point: neutral contribution</i>	<i>3 points: direct positive contribution</i>	
Rationale for scoring of points:		
LAG Regional Development Oberallgäu		

9 Contribution for regional adding value (A)		scored points
<i>0 points: negative contribution</i>	<i>2 points: indirect positive contribution</i>	
<i>1 point: neutral contribution</i>	<i>3 points: direct positive contribution</i>	
Rationale for scoring of points:		

10 Management / permanence of project (A)		scored points
<i>0 points: not relevant</i>	<i>2 points: concept for future is existing</i>	
<i>1 points: relevant for duration of project</i>	<i>3 points: owner shows permanence of project</i>	
Rationale for scoring of points:		

11 Accordance with regional strategy (A)		scored points
<i>0 points: negative contribution</i>	<i>2 points: indirect positive contribution</i>	
<i>1 point: neutral contribution</i>	<i>3 points: direct positive contribution</i>	
Rationale for scoring of points:		

12 Project specifics (A)		scored points
(e.g. free of barriers, fair, ...)		
<i>0 points: no efforts at all</i>	<i>2 points: specifics existing</i>	
<i>1 point: robust project nothing special</i>	<i>3 points: extraordinary specifics</i>	
Rationale for scoring of points:		

Sum of scored points	0
(maximum points = 36, necessary for a recommendation for applying for funds: 18)	



5.7 References

Regionalentwicklung Oberallgäu

www.regionaleentwicklung-oberallgaeu.de

Retrieved: 7th November 2020



Chapter 6: Monitoring and Evaluation

6.1 Focus of the training

Learning objectives

The participants will be able to:

- understand the need for M&E and the effects of projects and strategies at a regional level,
- understand the integration of all stakeholders in monitoring of the ongoing processes and evaluating the successes (and failures) of their regional activities.

Guiding questions

What is the meaning and understanding of monitoring and evaluation in LEADER?

What are most important considerations in managing M&E?

How to include M&E as a topic in the LEADER process?

6.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

6.2.1 Background

Monitoring and evaluation are essential components of a regional development process and relate to the implementation of single projects as well as an overall Local Development Strategy. Any development initiative or LAG is, sooner or later, confronted with difficult situations, such as there being no progress anymore, people going around in circles, low motivation levels, support from outside sources declines and some projects are even bound to fail completely. M&E can help to identify at an early stage problematic trends and thus can help to avoid them. M&E is also a valuable guide with which to inform the LAG team²⁴ and all key persons, if they are on the right track to meet their objectives. M&E also generates information about the impact of a specific activity or even about the development process as a whole. Monitoring and evaluation in regional development projects / processes is a continuous process. The results will help to improve future programme / project designs and the implementation.

Continuous M&E may help to:

- ensure a better understanding of what works and what does not work;
- systematically monitor the progress of processes or the implementation of projects;
- improve process / project effectiveness;
- enable improved reporting – to donors or governmental authorities as well as to local stakeholders;
- achieve a common understanding of monitoring and evaluation and reporting among all stakeholders in the RRED process.

6.2.2 Important consideration for M&E

The structure of the following considerations follows 5 important questions (see figure 7) to should be asked so as to develop an understanding of the M&E.

.....
 24 People who manage the LAG, e. g. the LAG board and / or LAG coordinator

Figure 7: Considerations for monitoring and evaluation



(1) What is needed: M or E?

Monitoring and evaluation refer to measuring the efficiency, effectiveness, and the impact of an on-going management activity, of a specific project, or even of a comprehensive, long-term development process (like a Local Development Strategy). Both monitoring and evaluation are geared towards learning from what has been aimed at, what has been done and what has been achieved at the end. Monitoring and evaluation are closely related but not identical.

» Monitoring

Monitoring is about continuous observation. It is usually defined as a systematic collection and analysis of information of an on-going activity or of the progress of a project or even an organisation (e.g. number and kind of participants that attended a meeting or a training event; category and number of stakeholders that participated in an economic development activity, including their own contribution). It is aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of a process, an organisation, or of the project implementation. Monitoring helps to keep the work on track and stay oriented towards an agreed upon target. Monitoring makes it possible to change quickly the way the processes, activities and projects are being implemented. Monitoring involves:

- Establishing indicators of efficiency, effectiveness and impact;
- Setting up a system to collect information relating to these indicators;
- Collecting and recording the information continuously;
- Analysing the information using the previously identified indicators;
- Drawing conclusion for improving the way the work is being done;
- Discussing the recommendations with the LAG-team.



» Evaluation

It compares the actual project results against the agreed objectives. It looks at what has been initially set out to be done, and what has been accomplished, and how it was done. Evaluation exercises are always based on criteria. A common set of criteria for evaluation purposes are:

- Relevance: Does the programme address a jointly identified need?
- Effectiveness: To what degree did we achieve our objectives?
- Efficiency: Did we achieve the objectives in a cost effective way?
- Sustainability: Will the results be long-lasting?
- Impact: Are we contributing to overarching goals (e.g. poverty reduction)?

(2) Why to do M&E?

M&E is an instrument for communicating the progress and results of any development activity to a broad audience. It is of use to the LAG Team, to the steering committee, to local politicians, to donors, and of course, it informs the community people about the result of their efforts. Reasons for M&E include:

» Early warning

M&E helps to identify shortcomings at an early stage. It helps to correct development processes if needed in a more targeted and effective way.

» Optimise internal processes

M&E can contribute to a better understanding of what works in Regional Development and what does not. Problems or bottlenecks in the management are detected in due time. M&E will raise questions such as:

- What are the jointly defined operational objectives of the team?
- Which tasks have been undertaken by the LAG team to achieve the objectives?
- Does the team have sufficient personal and financial resources?
- What else does the team need in order to improve their services?

» Project impact

The final impact of a project is of interest to anyone: to the community members, to the politicians, and of course, to the donors who provided some funds.

» Support learning

M&E can be of great help to use errors or failures as learning opportunities rather than treating them as something to be hidden. In the same way, examples of best practice can be provided for encouragement. M&E is a continual task within a rural development process.

» Ensure transparency

It ensures transparency and accountability to all stakeholders involved. The focus of M&E is not only on 'economic' items, i.e. efficient use of funds, but also on social aspects, i.e. level of participation of local communities in decision making, or on social learning.

» Reporting to the public

Continuous documentation of the results of a regional development initiative or LAG is useful for reacting quickly to enquiries from donors, from citizens and from the public in general. It must be possible to rapidly call up key information on the progress or results of an activity. That allows the regional management team to come up with an immediate statement, a press



release to the public or a brief report to influential persons, also for creating a positive image in the public and to the funding agencies.

(3) When to implement / do M&E

The time for M&E is always right: Undesirable trends can be recognised in good time, good arguments can be generated continuously to legitimise the use of internal or external funds. Finally, all actors can base their on-going decisions on real facts and not subjective impressions or even on prejudices.

- » Ex ante assessment

Usually, before the start of any rural development process an assessment is made to see into the viability of a development initiative. This assessment provides valuable information on the objectives of local people, the strong and weak points to be overcome, development potentials, interested actors, etc. M&E can also take place after finishing a project or development process (ex post).

- » Regularly

M&E requires yardsticks by which specific events, the performance of the management team, a new project or the overall impact is assessed. M&E often is understood as a 'once and for all' activity. However, M&E can only display its advantages if it is applied throughout the complete management or project cycle: From the first moment an idea is expressed, to the final moment the results of a project are examined.

- » Special events

Meetings at community or municipal level are very important means to gain the acceptance of local people and politicians. Therefore, it is crucial to assess the success or failure of those events. In smaller meetings or workshops, a short questionnaire can generate useful information. In both lengthy and short meetings, reflections can be initiated by the chairperson or the facilitator. In any case, the answers to the following questions are valuable:

- What did you like about the event (meeting, workshop, training)?
- What did you not like about it?
- Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

(4) How to do it?

A broad range of methods are available for M&E. Examples are personal discussions about recent critical developments with a key person, calling a public meeting when a severe slow-down in the project implementation becomes obvious, or using formal methods such as questionnaires and having the M&E done by an external consultant. Usually a distinction is made between:

- quantitative (surveys, data collection, measurements) and;
- qualitative (interviews, focus groups, community meetings, observations) methods.

As a rule of thumb, a combination of methods will usually provide the best results and will be most helpful for steering regional development processes.

Public or stakeholder meetings

The intention is to involve as many people with a direct stake in the work as possible. This may mean local politicians, government administration, representatives from private sector, etc. This includes members of local working groups and any person directly involved in regional development processes. For M&E all data concerning the different events should be documented

(number and kind of participants, topics discussed, decisions taken, etc.). Also similar questions like in a questionnaire can be placed in public and people give answers verbally or in writing. Afterwards, a joint discussion about findings should be done.

Figure 8: Different levels of depth and target groups for M&E in a LAG.

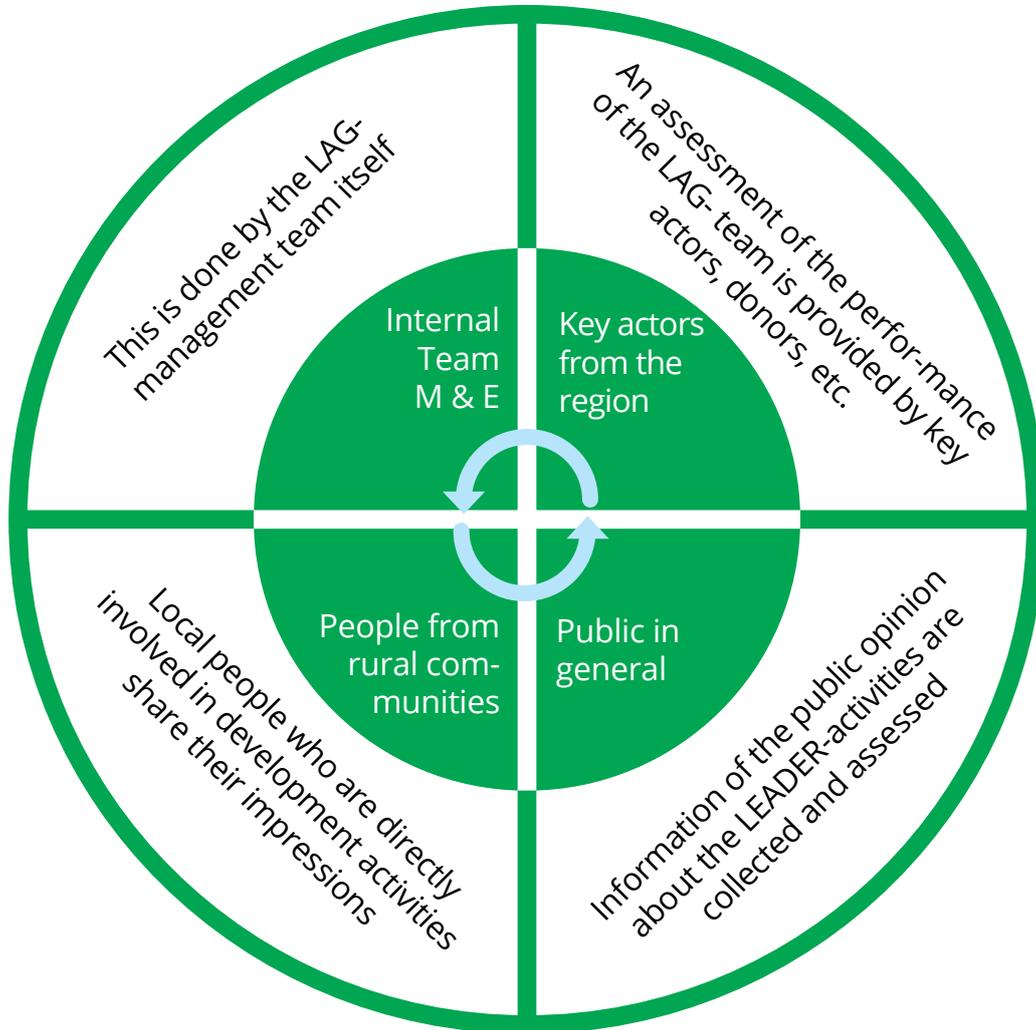




Table 12: Methods for M&E

Tool for M&E	Description	Usefulness	Disadvantages / critical points
Personal interviews	They involve asking specific questions. Questions can be open ended, structured or semi-structured.	Can be used with almost anyone who has some involvement with the regional development activities.	Requires some skill in the interviewer, time consuming.
Questionnaires	These are written questions that are used to get written responses.	This tool can save lots of time. It provides anonymity and they may come up with ideas they would not say to an interviewer face-to-face.	With people who do not read and write, someone has to go through the question-naire with them. Questionnaires are also overused and people easily get tired of them.
Key informants	These are interviews carried out with specialists in a topic or with a person who may be able to shed light on a particular process.	Key informants can be quite objective and offer useful insights into the activities as well about the 'big (political) picture'.	Needs a skilled interviewer with a good understanding of the topic.
Focus groups	A group of about 6 to 12 people is interviewed together by a skilled facilitator. The questions focus usually around a specific topic.	This can be a useful way of getting opinions from quite a large sample of local people, special stakeholder groups.	Sometimes, people may influence one another either to say something or keep quiet about critical issues.
(Community) Meetings	This involves a gathering of a fairly large group of local people. Specific issues about the situation, proposals, projects are discussed jointly.	Community meetings are useful for getting a broad response from many people on different issues.	An experienced facilitator is needed for putting questions to the audience and for coming to the most salient points.
Stories of change	Asking people to tell their personal story how they experienced change in the region.	A good way to capture the experiences of local people that are too complex to be measured in other ways.	It is often criticised as anecdotal and subjective.
Reports	Regular summary of activities and progress of a project or process.	Makes process and project steps of traceable and understandable	Often time consuming.

(5) Who does it?

» External M&E

External evaluations are recommended at greater intervals because of the costs. However, external evaluations are a must because of the pressure from sponsors and because they allow an outside perspective on the processes and results.

External M&E means that outside evaluators are contracted to assess the progress and impact of regional management or the LAG. The big advantage is that an outsider will often come up with new questions and new proposals that are not visible to those too intensively involved in the daily work and processes.

» Internal M&E

This involves the LAG team holding up a mirror to itself and assessing how it is doing. It takes a very self-reflective and honest attitude of all team members to do this effectively.



The internal organisational structure and processes are often forgotten. However, the more efficient these structures and processes are the better the motivation, interaction and performance of a LAG team will be. Additionally, the municipality steering committee or the working groups on specific topics in the communities may be examined

To run such an internal M&E, a questionnaire is very helpful. It should be developed by all involved group members and afterwards filled in individually. The results are then compared, discussed and put to consensus. The following topics should be covered in such an internal evaluation (the complete questionnaire is to be found in the annex 2):

- Mobilisation of regional actors, communities, and local groups;
- Co-ordination of rural development processes by the team;
- Project planning and implementation;
- Fund raising by the team;
- Public relations;
- Networking & learning.

Additional questionnaires can be easily developed for different purposes such as:

- Community meeting evaluation sheet;
- Network evaluation;
- Project final evaluation.

Internal

In internal M&E, the LAG team employs methods to monitor and evaluate their own work.

Team members

For internal M&E, the regional development initiative (or LAG) establishes a procedure from the beginning to identify strong and weak points in the implementation. Only the core management group are considered as team members.

Close collaborators

It is important for the internal learning process that the LAG team, the members of the steering committee, and also all members of different regional working groups (close collaborators), and project teams attempt to critically put the results of their activities 'under the microscope'. It allows us to learn from our own weaknesses, and it even helps to gradually enhance our analytical skills.

Stumbling blocks: What prevents people from applying and learning from M&E?

- It is very common that team members are too burdened by the heavy work load they are facing daily. Thus, no time is available for reflection and evaluation.
- Close to impossible is M&E if the objectives and milestones of rural development processes are not clearly defined.
- Commonly, the project budget is spent on 'doing something real', and not M&E.
- The integration of an M&E system is not included in the initial project proposal.

Research institute and other external bodies

A specialist research institute, a department of a university or even colleagues from another LAG in another region may be asked to conduct an evaluation.

The following box may once more make participants aware of the hindrances and main bottlenecks involved in doing monitoring and evaluation in the RRED process.

At the end of this module an example of the outline of an evaluation report can be found as well as an example of a questionnaire.



» Self-evaluation as a specific form of evaluation

Self-evaluation is a specific form of evaluation, also used in the LEADER context. A LAG or other group uses its internal expertise to carry out its own evaluations in order to understand its own activities better and improve the way it plans, implements and manages its regional development services. This procedure saves resources and can be implemented quite easily. But it needs to be conducted in a very honest way in order not to have a too uncritical view of their own work and results.

6.3 Format of workshop or session

The M&E topic can be presented and discussed as an input presentation in a half-day session. If there is a special need to deepen certain aspects of M&E, group work can be planned that puts elements of M&E in relation to the participants' home context.

Type of session	<p>Introductory session/ Group Work</p> <p>Hint: Visualise the guiding question for each group (in this example: five copies) with its specific task so that for every participant is clear what the task is.</p> <p>This group work is for up to 5 parallel working groups, each with three to five members, ideally from the same region.</p>
Duration	<p>Only to introduce the minimum information on the topic needs about half-a-day. As an interactive reflection of the content of Monitoring and Evaluation a group work should be able to relate the topic to the participants' reality. One day should be adequate for this.</p>
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory phase (explanation of the task, composition of the groups): 10 minutes. • Working phase: discussion and visualisation in the group: 30 minutes. • Preparation phase for group presentation: 15 minutes. • Presentation phase: maximum seven to ten minutes per group. <p>(Total: 65 minutes for the whole group work)</p> <p>If necessary, the working phase can be extended to maximum 45 minutes.</p>
Content	<p>Overview on the M&E situation in a specific rural region or LAG.</p>
Target Group and objectives	<p>The following group work has the objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to focus on the practical handling of M&E, self determined indicators and the requirements of M&E in a given situation. <p>The example addresses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interested local stakeholders who want to learn more about M&E; • Local Action Group members.
Questions for discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is M&E implemented in a rural region or LAG? • How can it be improved?
Material	<p>Best to use moderation cards, markers and boards. As an alternative, a flipchart is also possible if moderation material is not available.</p>



Explanation:

Step 1: Visualise the following question / task and instruction on a flipchart:

Give a brief overview on the current situation of monitoring and evaluation in your region (the information and data collection on ongoing projects and activities), e.g.

- *type and frequency of meetings, activities, procedures that are done regularly;*
- *M&E topics / issues that are under discussion;*
- *major constraints, difficulties faced in making M&E a systematic component;*
- *already existing formats and forms that capture and report important results.*

Please discuss and answer the question. Prepare a presentation and present the result in the plenary session.

Ask the participants whether they understood the task. If not: explain it again.

Step 2: Start group work

Step 3: The results of this group work are to be presented in plenary session afterwards. Central question in the discussion then: What exemplifies best to what extend we have achieved our goals and results (be specific)?

6.4 Material

6.4.1 Outline of a questionnaire: Assessing the Regional Development Team²⁵

Table 13: Example of Questionnaire

Example of a Questionnaire: Assessing the Regional Development Team					
Task 1: Mobilisation of regional actors, communities and local groups	Fully agree	Partially agree	Neutral	Partially disagree	Fully disagree
Are political decision makers well informed about the Regional Management initiative?					
Are people in rural communities and stakeholders aware about the new initiative(s)?					
Did the kick-off meetings at district and community level meet the expectations?					
Task 2: Coordination of rural development processes by the team	Fully agree	Partially agree	Neutral	Partially disagree	Fully disagree
Is the facilitation of workshops and the advice to local groups highly appreciated?					
Are the organisational structure and processes of the RM team office efficient?					

²⁵ The questionnaire was developed basing on the guideline 'Selbstavluierung in der Regionalentwicklung'.



Are the decision making processes of the team flexible and transparent to outsiders?					
Task 3: Project planning and implementation	Fully agree	Partially agree	Neutral	Partially disagree	Fully disagree
Are the project proposals based on the ideas & potentials of local communities and actors?					
Did the RM team continuously guide and support local projects and groups?					
Are the results of projects and working groups are being monitored and evaluated?					
Task 4: Fund raising by the team	Fully agree	Partially agree	Neutral	Partially disagree	Fully disagree
Did the RM team draft XY project proposal(s) according to ideas or rural communities?					
Did the project proposals prepared by the RM team gain the approval of sponsors?					
Does the RM team report quarterly to the donors about the project(s) implementation?					
Task 5: Public relations	Fully agree	Partially agree	Neutral	Partially disagree	Fully disagree
Does the RM team ensure a steady flow of information to the public in general?					
Did the RM team establish a so-called 'information centre' for the public in general?					
Is the local press and radio well informed about the new RM initiative(s)?					
Task 6: Networking & learning	Fully agree	Partially agree	Neutral	Partially disagree	Fully disagree
Is the RM team playing a key role in strengthening regional networks?					
Does the RM team stimulate and support learning processes within the communities?					
Did the RM team establish a continuous exchange of experiences with other initiatives?					



6.5 References

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Download address for pdf file:

<https://www.ble-medien-service.de/7133/selbstevaluation-in-der-regionalentwicklung-leitfaden-und-methodenbox>

Retrieved: 7th November 2020



C. Method for working in LEADER

Chapter 7: Moderation

This chapter shall give some general hints and support to Trainers of ToT. That means it is not so focused on participants of training sessions, like the other chapters. But it can also help interested participants from LAGs to learn first steps of moderation and facilitation. As such this chapter can also be used as an input for participants.

7.1 Focus of the training

Learning objectives

The participants will be able to understand:

- the purpose of moderation;
- the advantage of visualisation;
- how to plan a event.

Guiding questions

What is the advantage of moderation?

What is the role of moderator?

How is an event planned and what do we have to keep in mind?

7.2 Why moderation?

Moderation method helps to organise discussions and working sessions by a neutral person with the goal being to produce utilisable results at the end of the event.

Ideally, a moderator has neutral attitude and is independent from the specific topic to be discussed and from the given structures. A moderator is a method specialist and uses the techniques of visualisation and posing questions for the conduction of a discussion. Sometimes the term 'facilitator' is used. There is no fixed, hard and fast definition that exists among experts. Thus, both terms can be used in the same way.

For the recording of the facts and of the discussion process, the technique of 'mobile visualisation' is used: it is the flexible and incorporates the use of mobile boards, flipcharts, cards, and markers.

Thus in a well moderated event:

- the working atmosphere is positive and constructive;
- the participants are motivated to contribute with their knowledge and experience;
- each participant is treated equally;
- the participants exchange different views in an objective manner;
- the event is problem oriented, which means focusing on the solution of a given problem / question;
- no personal debates and no discussion on other, non-relevant issues are lead; it is a goal-oriented discussion.

Especially in the LEADER context, moderation is very helpful in steering a discussion among very different stakeholders and in a variety of different topics.



7.3 Planning of an Event

For the planning of an event many factors have to be taken into account. The following general scheme is useful for a small team-event as well as for bigger events like a regional-conference with 100 people.

Table 14: Planning an event

Planning Step	Description	Helpful questions
1. Identify the context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ environment of the event. ▪ history and background. ▪ political context. ▪ training needs and objectives. ▪ expectations. ▪ outputs. 	<p>Who is involved? (partners, donors, experts, trainers, decision makers...)</p> <p>Who are the participants (stakeholders)?</p>
2. Define the procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ general objectives, issues, content. ▪ date and duration. ▪ expected outputs. ▪ mix of methods. ▪ responsibilities. ▪ logistics (location, transport, material...). ▪ invitations. 	<p>What are the objectives of the event?</p> <p>Organisation and conduct: Who is responsible for what?</p>
3. Organise the schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ script (scenario) for each day. ▪ longer events: programme structure. 	<p>What has to be elaborated? Which method can be used? When to set breaks?</p>
4. Evaluate the event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ during the event: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - suggestion box. - feedback / comments. - tem meetings. - midterm evaluation. - mood-barometer. - final evaluation of the event. (e.g. questionnaire) ▪ after the event: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lessons learned. - conclusions. - transfer of skills and knowledge. 	<p>What is the mood in the group at the moment?</p> <p>What is the general feedback on the event?</p>

The results of the evaluation can form the basis for a follow-up or new event (arrow). Then these planning steps start again.



7.4 Example for a Scenario

Each day of the event has to be planned in detail to:

- reach the target group;
- be in time with the schedule;
- find useful methods for the specific topics and goals.

This plan we call a 'scenario' or 'script' and it is used internally by the moderator and all persons who are involved in the planning of the event. For the participants it is enough to have a programme overview or schedule, which is not so detailed.

Figure 9: Example of a schedule

Time	Duration in min.	Working step	Remarks/ method	Technical equipment	responsible
9:00	5	Agenda of the day		Flipchart	Tom
9:05	85	What are your experiences in training, LEADER, moderation etc.?	To find out the background of the participants/ matrix	Flipchart Boards Mod. Kit	Anna
10:30	30	Break			
11:00	45	Overview: Financing and programme-system of the EU	Architecture of financing system of EU	LCD	Anna
11:45	45	Specific aspects for Westbalkan-countries	e.g.Study:"Application of the LEADER approach in the Western Balkan Countries": summary/ key message: IPA/ IPARD	Flipchart Boards Mod. Kit	Paul
12:30	90	Lunch Break			
14:00	30	LEADER - conceptual framework/ the regulation: The 7 key features	Presentation of the basis and philosophy of LEADER	LCD Flipchart Boards Mod. Kit	Tom
14:30	30	Introduction into `Local Action Groups`	Background, function, purpose, members...	Flipchart Boards Mod. Kit	Tom
			input: overview		
			presentation of 2-3 examples from Westbalkan countries		
15:00	30	Local Action Groups: How to involve/ mobilise people/ stakeholders into the LEADER-/ CLLD-process? Which partners do we need and what are our expectations of them?	Discussion of experiences and Best Practice (Group work); Presentation, discussion, conclusions; Exercise (group work): Stakeholder analysis	Flipchart Boards Mod. Kit	Anna
15:30	30	Break			
16:00	45	Local Action Groups: How to involve/ mobilise people/ stakeholders into the LEADER-/ CLLD-process? Which partners do we need and what are our expectations of them?	Exercise (group work): Stakeholder analysis, presentations of group results	Flipchart Boards Mod. Kit	Anna
16:45	15	Wrap-up of the seminar day	Flashlight		Tom
17:00		End of the day			

7.5 Examples of event-formats

Table 15: Examples of event-formats

Type of event	Target group	Focus	Expected results
LEADER Kick-Off	Public	Information on LEADER.	People/ stakeholders are interested and activated.
World Café	Public, stakeholders	Discussion of specific topics, to collect ideas.	Basic input/ material for the LDS.
Regional LEADER conference	Public, stakeholders	Discussion of specific topics/ ideas for fields of action.	Activation of stakeholders to collect ideas.
Bilanz Conference	Stakeholders (public)	Mid-term evaluation of LEADER implementation.	Evaluation and lessons learned; conclusions for next steps.
Kick Off (of a project)	Stakeholders and partners who are involved in a project	Start event for implementation.	Presentation of project; agreement/ definition of next steps.
Project workshop	'Project-people'	To implement a project.	Information about state of a project and further steps.
MINI-SWOT Workshop (45 Min)	Specific target group	SWOT on specific topic.	Material for LDS.
Final event	Public, stakeholders, LAG	Review on success.	Positive atmosphere, motivation for new period.

This table can also be presented with mobile visualisation in a workshop as this example shows:

Figure 10: Example of a visualisation (Photo: Gero Wieschollek)

Type of event	Target group	Focus	Expected results
Kick-Off ⁽¹⁾ LEADER	public	information on LEADER	people/stakeholders are interested and activated
World-café	public/ stakeholders	to discuss specific topics and to collect ideas	ideas/material for LDS
Regional/ LEADER conference	Stakeholders (public)	to discuss topics/ to collect ideas in spec. action fields	activation of stakeholders to collect ideas
"Bilanz-konferenz"	Stakeholders (public)	mid-term evaluation	evaluation, lessons learned, conclusions
Kick-Off ⁽²⁾ (project)	Stakeholders who are involved in a project	start-event for implementation	-to present project -to define next steps
Project workshop	"project-people"	to implement a project	information: state of project, next steps etc.
Mini SWOT-workshop : 45 Min	specific target group (e.g. association)	SWOT on specific topic	material for SWOT for LDS
Final event	Stakeholders/ public/ LAG	Review on success	-positive atmosphere -motivation for new period

7.6 Materials

For moderation and visualisation, different materials are needed. A brief overview on basic materials:

Figure 11: Moderation Kit



Typical content of a moderation kit:

- cards in different sizes and colours;
- pins;
- markers in different colours;
- coloured adhesive dots;
- scissors;
- tape;
- glue,

Source: www.neuland.com

Figure 12: Different markers



Useful for visualisation: flexible use (thick and thin) with wedge nib of pen.

Source:
www.neuland.com



Not useful for visualisation: thin only.

Source:
www.neuland.com

Figure 13: Flipchart



Source:
www.neuland.com

Figure 14: Moderation board (also: Metaplan board)



Source:
www.neuland.com



7.7 References

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Notes

