

# LEADER outside the EU

Lessons learnt for the Our Common Future WP2

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# With great help of Iris Absenger-Helml data gathered from

1. Western Balkan countries/ Marina Toheska, Dragan Roganovic: **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia**
2. Caucasus/ Shorena Sujashvili: **Georgia**
3. Latin America/ Maria Jose Murciano: **Bolivia, Mexico, Colombia**
4. Africa/ Petri Rinne: **Mozambique**
5. Europe/ Alistair Prior, Vivi Båvner: **Scotland and Sweden**  
(experiences from former LEADER territories left without EU funding)

# Questions asked

1. Funding source?
2. Time frame?
3. Reasons why the country/region in question was relevant for implementing bottom up approach (LEADER)?
4. Was the initiative demanded by the grassroots level or introduced by a donor? (EU, national government, aid organisation etc.)?
5. What type of external expertise was provided? To whom expertise was ensured? Is there cooperation activities with other countries on development of LEADER on national/regional or LAG level?
6. Was there any earlier experience on similar bottom-up rural development policies in the area?
7. Scope of the target area (national, regional, local)?
8. How many LAGs were established and what was the LAG structure?
9. Were all the LEADER principles followed?
10. Results and impacts, risks and opportunities identified?
11. How the project sustainability was secured after the pilot project ended?
- 12. Which were the innovative elements and lessons learnt for the future LEADER in the EU?**

# Lessons: *North Macedonia*

“EU LEADER approach is the most effective approach to Improve cooperation between local stakeholders – pay attention to innovation in animation activities to raise awareness and support local, encourage LAGs as potential hubs of social innovation.”

# Lessons: *Latin America*

“There is life beyond the EU financial umbrella. Would EU/LEADER rural inhabitants have the same commitment if there were no EAFDER funds to support them? Maybe yes, but probably NO.

In Latin America you find freshness, innovation, desire and passion. That in Europe has been lost, we have become bourgeois! It is difficult for us to explore other ways of financing and other business model for our GALs and for our territories, and especially dynamics to expand and maintain the active partnership.

In Europe we are very reactive, and we should be more proactive.”



# Lessons: *Georgia*

“Support of the LEADER family and funds for cooperation projects is crucial for the LAGs from non-EU countries to share successful practices and empower the people for better understanding and support from the government.”



# Lessons: *Serbia*

“Rural communities very often have a lack of initiative and limited human resources for the implementation of development activities.

The LEADER approach provides the necessary capacities by animating the existing ones locally and engaging the missing ones from outside.”

# Lessons: *Serbia*

“LEADER can bring positive change on local level in rural areas and support local communities in creating a policy and implementing local initiative that address local people’s real needs.

The previous experience with the establishing of LEADER support suggests that the activation and mobilization of local actors and creating their partnerships should start once the whole system is prepared and ready to handle this measure regularly. Otherwise, there is a risk that the lack of continuity, consistency, transparency and sustainability in policy implementation can cause a loss of interest or confidence of actors.”



# Lessons: *Montenegro*

“As a result of the conducted research and analysis of the current state of readiness for the implementation of the LEADER programme in Montenegro, there are following conclusions:

- Low level of promotion of the LEADER Approach in all three sectors of society.
- Undefined measures of support for financing the LAGs on a local and national level.
- Undefined rules of legal method of forming LAGs and their accreditation. Currently, the only legal form for registering LAGs is as NGOs.
- Unrecognized need for creating local strategies for rural development.
- Unrecognized need for establishing LAGs and LEADER support from the decision-makers, especially on a local level.

# Lessons: *Montenegro*

- Unacceptably low number of people in ministries and local governments dealing with LAGs and LEADER issues.
- Uneducated media about the processes of rural development and LEADER programmes.
- Low level of representation of rural development as a theme in competitions for project financing from public funds.
- Absence of measures designed to support the budgets of local governments for the implementation of the LEADER model in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.
- Lack of support of local governments in providing necessary infrastructure and technical conditions for the work of LAGs.”

# Lessons: *Mozambique*

“In order to make largely illiterate people to participate in project calls and LAG trainings, everything had to be very accessible and assisted.

Digitalisation and grown bureaucracy in the EU might chase some of our traditional rural applicants away from the LEADER support schemes, so we should pay higher attention to the accessibility of the future LEADER and avoid the rural population divide between those who can and those who cannot.”

# Lessons: *Scotland*

“LEADER in Scotland since BREXIT has transitioned to CLLD, with all but one LAGs functioning post Brexit. LAGs in Scotland are funded from national funds – but it is annual funding meaning that scope to be strategic and plan is difficult. The transition from 2014-2020 programming was problematic for money, resulting in smaller teams, a depleted rural network and lack of focus from within government – where the focus very much lay on the future of payments for agriculture.

We are trying to maintain the ethos of LEADER and think about how we can maintain and enhance our approach to partnership working from the bottom up.”

# Lessons: *Sweden*

“2014-2020 there was a national competition and 5 LAGs unfortunately lost. We were not a prioritized LAG. Our LAG was formed in 2007. It is a collaboration between 10 sparsely populated municipalities with a common history of mining. Bergslagen is famous for its iron ore and had its blooming era in 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century. LEADER was successfully carried out in our region during 2007-14 and people were looking forward to continue 2014-2020.

Since we didn't have a budget then we didn't have many activities. The LAG board had meetings and decided to apply for the next programme in 2021. As far as I know our former LAG manager became head of the cultural department in a municipality and she told me she applies the LEADER-way of thinking when the municipality funds local initiatives. LEADER-method is very useful. This time Sweden “promised” they'll really try to help all LAG:s that want to be part of LEADER to get funding. We succeeded and now we are “back in business.”



# Recommendations for Our Common Future

1. EU funding share for LEADER implementation must be secured with a **minimum allocation rule** (now 5% of CAP rural development funds), otherwise the LEADER implementation and the future of thousands of EU's rural territories is at risk.
2. **Enough capacity must be reserved** for the Managing Authorities, Payment Authorities and National Rural Networks to **support the LEADER implementation process and empower the LAGs** towards the innovation broker role.
3. **A right balance between innovation and bureaucracy** must be found. Now our system is poorly accessible and interesting only for those who cannot find support from elsewhere, and those who are professionals in project admin.
4. Some LEADER specific features are more important than others. Pay special attention to the mechanisms and implementation of **bottom-up approach, public-private partnership, innovation** and **interterritorial/ transnational cooperation**, including rural-urban linkages.
5. **Communication about LEADER method and benefits is vital!**



ONDE HA VIDA HA ESPERANCA

# THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

See more in Google:

[A LEADER Dissemination  
Guide Book](#)

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