



ENRD webinar

Improving LEADER delivery for resilient rural territories

Highlights report

Participants exchanged their views and practical experiences related to resilient local communities, resilient LAGs, and effective LEADER delivery systems to support rural resilience.

The event provided the opportunity to discuss the main factors associated with these aspects of resilience and the relevant needs and roles of LEADER stakeholders at different levels of the LEADER delivery chain in contributing to resilient rural territories in the EU.

The workshop attracted 51 participants from 20 EU Member States.

Event Information

Date: 18 September 2020

Location: online meeting

Organisers: ENRD Contact Point

Participants: RDP Managing Authorities, Paying Agencies, EU institutions, LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs), LAG networks.


Outcomes: main characteristics of resilience discussed, experiences and views exchanged on most important aspects of strengthening resilience in LEADER

Web page: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/8th-rural-networks-leaderclid-sub-group-meeting_en

Introduction

Peter Toth (ENRD CP) '[set the scene](#)' - providing the context for the workshop discussions. He introduced the three discussion topics and characterised resilience in the LEADER context as the ability to respond and adapt to emerging challenges flexibly in local rural territories. These challenges are linked to climate change mitigation and adaptation; the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for economic recovery in its aftermath; and addressing depopulation and ageing in rural areas. The LEADER implementation challenges related to the RDP transition arrangements and preparations for the new CAP Strategic Plans have also been described. Flexibility, adaptability, resilience, strengthening networking and cooperation are some of the elements that need to be considered in order to formulate adequate responses. **Karolina Jasinska Muehleck (DG AGRI)** referred to the demonstrable achievements of LAGs in responding successfully to the COVID-19 situation. She emphasised that LEADER is a tool to be used to its maximum potential. Acknowledging the differences in capacities and resources available across the Member States, a LEADER delivery system that allows for flexibility and enables local resilience should be available to every rural community.

Strengthening resilience in local communities

 [Resilience in local communities](#) can be characterised by a number of important components. **Jordi Terrades (LAG Adrinoc, ARCA, Spain)** was of the opinion that some of these components relate to the good relationship with local stakeholders, in the context of 'policentric governance' and a shared thinking that enables the community to face complex problems. **Piotr Sadlocha (Polish Rural Forum, Poland)** reinforced this idea and added that common values, common governance and shared objectives are key contributors to local resilience. **Robert Hall (ECOLISE, EU)** referred to 'natural resilience' or 'social resilience' as one of the main goals of work in LEADER which constantly requires the building of social capital. Participants agreed that a community is resilient if it can adapt quickly to emerging situations and quoted social capital, social innovation and social inclusion as key preconditions of this.

For **Mia Lundqvist (LEADER Mälardalen, Sweden)** LAGs play a key role as facilitators of relevant processes, which improve resilience in local communities. All these panelists agreed that to do so LAGs should act as 'neutral' stakeholders with a transversal vision of the territory and a constant striving for creating synergies and interactions between various local needs, engaging all types of local stakeholders in the process. LAGs can also help to guarantee equality of opportunities locally, another key component of cohesive and resilient local communities. The cooperation and networking between neighbouring communities, as well as developing new ways of working and sharing experiences between LAGs are further key elements. When asked about the ENRD's role in contributing to strengthened resilience in rural communities, participants highlighted continuity – both in terms of programming periods and funding. This allows for the transition of experiences and lessons between programming periods e.g. through peer to peer exchanges and mentoring.



Resilient Local Action Groups (LAGs)

Several features were recognised to characterise [resilient LAGs](#). Panellists and LAG managers, **Alina Baba (LAG Napoca Porolissum, Romania)** and **Ede Teinbas (Western Harju Partnership, Estonia)** both emphasised LAGs' activities to engage local stakeholders, to respond to the needs of the territory and to increase trust between the LAG and the community. **Anni Mari Isoherranen (LAG Keskipiste, Finland)** added another key element – keeping up the interest of local youth in LAG activities. Developing the LAG as an organisation was also emphasised, a key component of this according to **Matthias Wagner (LSG Leipziger Muldenland, Germany)** is long-term, stable financing for the LAG activities which can help make the LAG a reliable development partner in the long term. To maximise their contribution to local rural communities, LAGs need to maintain and manage their good relationship with local stakeholders, work flexibly and in a responsive manner, and demonstrate 'social consciousness', sensitivity to local needs. The principles of "less time for bureaucracy – more time for people" and "think how you can solve problems and not why you can't" were widely supported by group participants. Participants mentioned they had started working with new stakeholder groups during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly youth and the elderly, and wanted to ensure they included them moving forward. LAGs need to be enabled to work flexibly and in an innovative way – Managing Authorities' trust towards LAGs is a key component of this. A resilient LAG was also seen to be a 'state of mind'.

Effective LEADER delivery systems to support rural resilience

LAGs need an enabling framework – an [effective LEADER delivery system to support rural resilience](#) that allows them to respond to local needs flexibly. According to **Andreas Griess (Managing Authority, Saxony, Germany)** LAGs are in the centre of rural communities. In order to successfully support local development they need flexible local development strategies (LDSs). These should be adaptable to locally emerging needs and not bound by limitations regarding development themes or types of beneficiaries. **Bojana Markotic Krstinic (LEADER Network, Croatia)** added that adequate funding for LDSs is crucial, as well as considering using LAGs as partners in the chain of communication from Managing Authorities (MAs) to local stakeholders. The importance of communication, funding and simple procedures was also emphasised by **Juha-Matti Markkola (National Rural Network, Finland)** who argued that delivery systems need to be built for quality and results, with networking recognised as a key component. **Christa Rockenbauer Peirl (Managing Authority, Austria)** considered reduced bureaucracy, increased use of simplified cost options, and an improved governance system as success factors of effective delivery systems.

All panelists agreed that MAs should facilitate good communication in the delivery chain and ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly formulated for all stakeholders at all levels. All agreed that networking within the ENRD helps LEADER stakeholders connect with other MSs and with the European Commission. NRNs should have a strong role in capacity building, while LAG networks can provide support through lobbying, developing expert networks and communication about LEADER achievements. Ideas participants suggested for practical ways ENRD can support the development of effective LEADER delivery systems included: more participation of the ENRD in MS level meetings; orientations on how LEADER could make use of the planned EU Recovery Fund under the RDPs; raising and discussing specific questions related to LEADER delivery and sharing lessons about what has proven to be most effective.

Lessons learned



The exchanges during this mini-workshop reflected on multiple dimensions of resilience and LEADER:

- LAGs and LDSs act as an 'interface' between local and regional/national levels
- Adequate resources and strong links with delivery systems are essential
- Allow LAGs to truly reflect local specificities in their LDSs
- Communicate well, be transparent and identify clear roles and responsibilities to build trust
- Ensure a flexible approach to LEADER implementation to let it deliver to its maximum potential