



European Network for
Rural Development

Umbrella Projects in LEADER/CLLD

ENRD workshop

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1. Introduction

This workshop was organised by the ENRD Contact Point in response to the request of some Managing Authorities (MAs) who wanted to exchange on the opportunities and challenges linked to the application of umbrella projects in LEADER/CLLD. It contributed to the broader aim of capacity building and peer exchange to support a simpler and more effective rolling out of CLLD and LEADER.

The initiating MAs from Germany, Austria, Luxembourg and Sweden organised a preparatory meeting in late January 2016, in order to identify the key features of umbrella projects and potential issues or questions they would like to ask to other MAs and the European Commission. A discussion document developed at that meeting was translated into English and distributed to the participants prior to the workshop.

The workshop brought together more than 20 participants from 11 Member States as well as European Commission Officials including DG AGRI auditors.

The workshop format was designed to offer participants the maximum possibility to exchange on and clarify any uncertainties and questions they had.

2. Key challenges of using umbrella projects in LEADER/CLLD

13.30 – 14.00

Welcome and
introductory
presentation

The workshop was opened by **Paul Soto**, the **Team leader of the ENRD Contact Point**.

Frank Bartelt from the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture presented the rationale for the meeting and the activities that preceded it. He described his understanding of the process of approval of an umbrella project with its key elements, notably:

- formally, the beneficiary of an umbrella project is always the LAG, which submits an application to the relevant authority; this authority carries out the necessary ex-ante checks, including reasonableness of costs;
- the promoters of the “sub-projects” may submit requests to the LAG and obtain acceptance (less formal than the application and approval of “standard” CLLD projects).

3. Group work & discussion

14.00 – 15.00

and

15.30 – 16.30

Facilitated
discussion

In the discussion, participants shared the existing experience with umbrella projects (e.g. **Scotland, Sweden, Finland** already used similar mechanisms in the previous period and are thinking about or planning to adapt and continue them, **Poland** has already developed the necessary national legislation for 2014-2020).

A number of questions were asked to representatives of the European Commission, in particular regarding the degree of detail needed at the application stage to enable the necessary administrative checks. In the light of the discussion, two options can be considered:

- the LAG provides a preliminary description of the activities (sub-projects) to be carried out within the umbrella project, with sufficient detail about the tasks and their costs (in a similar way as with public procurement), or
- the LAG can “bundle” together a number of existing initiatives, which will become “sub-projects” upon approval of the umbrella project.

In any case, it was noted that all the elements of the administrative checks have to be addressed, including verification of the reasonableness of the costs submitted with the application for support, as set out in Article 48 of reg. 809/2014.

4. Next steps and conclusions

16.30 – 17.00

The participants agreed that umbrella projects can, under certain conditions, be a **useful tool in LEADER delivery**. They can help shorten the application process for small beneficiaries, reduce the amount of paperwork and make it possible to involve target groups that would otherwise be difficult to reach.

Certain MAs declared they are going to take specific action following the meeting, e.g. the German MA will revise the background material developed prior to the workshop and disseminate it among regional MAs to help them make decisions about using umbrella projects.

The following activities were proposed in the short term:

- sharing existing forms and tools (e.g. checklists) related to umbrella projects with interested MAs (from Poland),
- sharing results of audits which raised questions about umbrella projects (from Scotland),
- developing a fact-sheet about umbrella projects, defining closer the concept and possibly comparing different approaches,
- perhaps also developing some kind of guidance on reasonableness of costs in non-marketable projects.

It was suggested that participating MAs start to implement umbrella-projects, gain experience and then review the system/ discuss their experience of these approaches in around two years.

In the long term, the possibility should be considered of revising the EAFRD legislation to align it with other EU Funds, in particular concerning the need for ex-ante calculations of lump sums and up-front checking of the reasonableness of costs in umbrella projects.

A more comprehensive description of the issues related to umbrella projects is presented in an Umbrella Project Fact Sheet being prepared by the ENRD Contact Point.