



**“WE WANT LEADER TO BE AN
INDEPENDENT, TRUSTED,
CREATIVE, WELL-KNOWN,
SOLUTION-ORIENTED
MOVEMENT BASED ON
COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP
WITH THE AIM OF HAVING
SMART, VIBRANT RURAL
COMMUNITIES.”**



The European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD) is an international non-profit making association founded in 1999.

Set up to improve the quality of life in rural areas by spreading the philosophy and principles of the LEADER/ Community Led Local Development (CLLD) method, ELARD brings together at present over 2500 Local Action Groups (LAGs) from 26 countries – including non-EU Member-States –, committed to involve all stakeholders in local development in rural areas.



ELARD influences through advocacy EU policies in favour of local development in rural areas

... by bringing forward the good practices of LEADER and the needs of ELARD's members and rural communities in general

ELARD contributes to create critical mass

... by being a member of pan-European movements and campaigns like the European Rural Parliament and the European Countryside Movement and by working closely with European consultative bodies [e.g.: European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)], as well as with the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD)

ELARD promotes cooperation and experience sharing

... between the national and regional LEADER networks and the LAGs by organizing seminars and conferences and providing information material to ELARD's members

ELARD disseminates the LEADER method beyond the EU

... supporting the establishment of a local action groups network and cooperating in pilot projects to launch a LEADER programme



LEADER PRINCIPLES

The 7 LEADER principles have been extended in this programming period (2014-2020) under the broader term “Community-Led Local Development” (CLLD) to all European structural and investment funds.



- ▶ **LOCAL PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS:** Local Action Groups (LAGs) are an original feature of the LEADER approach bringing together different stakeholders of a region, to take responsibility for designing and implementing a strategy, including the selection of projects to be funded.
- ▶ **INTEGRATED AND MULTI-SECTORAL ACTIONS:** in order to solve the complex problems of rural areas, different sectors must work together in a holistic approach. Links between the different economic, social, cultural and environmental players need to be established.
- ▶ **AREA-BASED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:** LAGs themselves define a certain territory as their target area, considering its common traditions, resource, identities or needs and expectations of the local people and communities.
- ▶ **INNOVATION:** new responses to the specific problems of rural areas, that remained unsolved by traditional – and mostly sectoral – policy instruments, can be provided through supporting technological, organizational and, especially, social innovation actions.
- ▶ **BOTTOM-UP ELABORATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIES:** local actors participate in the development of the strategy, in the selection of the priorities to be pursued in their regions and in projects implementation.
- ▶ **NETWORKING:** in order to work effectively LAGs exchange their achievements, experiences and know-how and disseminate innovation and relevant practices.
- ▶ **COOPERATION:** goes further than networking. It refers to joint projects and actions between different territories within a Member-State or different Member-States of the EU or even in third countries, to solve similar problems or achieve complementarities..

UPDATED POSITION OF ELARD RENEWING LEADER/CLLD FOR 2021-2027 PROGRAMMING PERIOD

The European LEADER Association for Rural Development, ELARD agreed and issued the Tartu declaration at the end of 2016. This was followed late 2017 by the position paper for LEADER post-2020. In September 2018 ELARD organised the "Conference "LEADER Reloaded" in Évora, Portugal with more than 280 participants from 28 countries to take stock on the achievements of LEADER/CLLD in the light of the legal proposals for the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) which were issued earlier 2018.

For the next generation of European funding the European Commission has proposed that a part of the ESIF should be used to get **"Europe closer to citizens"**. The achievements of LEADER/CLLD have shown that Local Action Groups (LAGs) are able to defend the European values, if recognised as local drivers for change and development and enabled to innovate in their areas. In consequence, LEADER/CLLD is a powerful tool to implement the **UN 2030 Agenda in rural areas**.

Now that the negotiation process within the European institutions is more advanced and the elections for the European Parliament are very close, ELARD would like to state the following:

- ▶ **ELARD calls for the reintegration of the EAFRD into the Common Provision Regulations**, and therefore supports the European Parliament and many other rural stakeholder organisations in the wish to keep rural development within the "ESIF family". A greater inter-relationship between these funds is vital for the financing of territorial instruments, in particular CLLD/LEADER Local Development Strategies;
- ▶ ELARD raises the concern that the joint programming of the 1st and the 2nd pillar of the Common Agriculture Policy entails the **risk that non-agricultural rural development will become a minor issue** in the CAP;
- ▶ **ELARD welcomes that LEADER is mandatory in EAFRD. However, the earmarking of 5%, with the proposed cut of the second pillar, will result in substantially less funding** compared to the current period. Therefore, **ELARD requests to ensure at least the same budget for LEADER**. Moreover, ELARD strongly regrets that **ERDF, ESF and EMFF do not foresee a minimum percentage for CLLD**. ELARD asks the Commission to ensure that **LEADER is mandatory in every region in Europe**;
- ▶ **ELARD welcomes the efforts for simplification and de-regulation** in the legislation and have faith that these will materialise on

all levels. Regarding the difficulties which LEADER is experiencing due to the application of State Aid provisions, it would be useful to consider a block exemption for LEADER/CLLD projects in the framework of this simplification;

- ▶ ELARD welcomes that Member States can create a "common basket" of dedicated **funding for CLLD from the different Funds. ELARD encourages Member-States to operate under a common framework, with a lead fund and coordinated by a dedicated Management Authority/Intermediate Body.**
- ▶ ELARD considers it crucial to **create and support incentives for Member-States to design and implement efficient solutions, especially to encourage the use of "one-stop-shop" solutions**, based on the good examples for the implementation of multi-funded CLLD in rural areas, in the current programming period;
- ▶ ELARD points at the risks of letting the **networking for LEADER** take place in a CAP Network, with a stronger focus on agricultural and environmental issues, neglecting territorial approaches and therefore propose to the Commission to create a **pilot CLLD Support Unit at EU level** to support networking, transnational cooperation and capacity building of all LAGs in all Funds, similar to the FARNET Support Unit;
- ▶ **ELARD embraces the Smart Villages approach into the LEADER methodology** and contends that LAGs are the most suitable platform to bring Europe closer to citizens – as multi-stakeholder partnerships – and to implement the Smart Village approach;
- ▶ ELARD is convinced that **LEADER/CLLD and LAGs are the right instrument to localize, implement, follow-up and review the Sustainable Development Goals** in rural areas. Involvement of rural areas is essential for the achievement of the SDGs;
- ▶ ELARD asks for clarity on the technical measures to **allow a smooth transition between the current funding period and the next, including LEADER/CLLD**, since the new CAP framework will need more time to enter into force.

*Approved in ELARD General Assembly,
Brussels, 10th April 2019*

ELARD contact details:

Email: elard@elard.eu

Website: <http://www.elard.eu/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ELARDaisbl/>