



2020-10-19

# “Good Practice in using LEADER/CLLD as a multilevel governance tool”



**Country:** Austria

**Name of person interviewed:** Stefan Niedermoser,  
LEADER-forum Austria



## 1. How is your country/state working with LEADER/CLLD in this programming period?

LEADER is carried out by 77 LAGs in Austria, they cover 91% of the Austrian territory, and only municipalities above 30.000 inhabitants are not involved. 9 LAGs are working with multifunded CLLD with the EFRD, also cross-border with Italy. The LEADER system in Austria works quite good, although simplification is always a big topic. Regarding SCO (Simplified Cost Option) we have implemented lump sum for projects with a budget less than 5.700 Euro and also umbrella projects can be used for specific topics. For LAG management and animation we use the 15 % flat rate for indirect costs. For transnational cooperation there is a separate budget on state level usable for the LAGs.

## 2. How will LEADER work in your country/state during the transition period?



The plans for the transition period are quite clear, but they need to be established on a legal basis at EU level and we are waiting for this legal framework. The ministry already informed us (LAGs) in summer 2020, that around 2/7 (provided a transition period of two years) of the “new” budget 2021-2027 will be distributed to the existing LAGs. This means that we will use “new money” with “old rules” to implement LEADER in 2021 and 2022. We plan to start with the new programming period at the beginning of 2023. In that way there will not be any financial or organisational gaps for the LAGs in between



**European Leader Association  
for Rural Development**  
Brussels, [www.elard.eu](http://www.elard.eu)

**SWEDISH  
PRESIDENCY**  
2020-2021





the programming periods. In the current proposal the LAGs can calculate at least with the same amount of money as now, maybe even a little bit more. In average, this means around 450.000 Euro per year per LAG in 2021 and 2022. So we keep working as usual and it does not look like the transition period will cause LAGs any additional trouble.

### **3. What is the outlook on how LEADER/CLLD will be engaged in the Next Generation fund?**

LEADER can benefit if LAGs are able to provide special services and functions for the rural society and can establish a direct funding out of the Next Gen fund. Since many months we are working on a clear vision for LEADER in relation to crisis and transition management. In my view, we need to aim higher than just to call for more money, as LEADER regions we have to offer clear proposals for the management of this situation and we also have to work on our own roles. If we transform our LAGs from being merely funding advisers into regional (social) entrepreneurs and quote out our various functions in our regions, LEADER will be strongly engaged in the future development.

### **4. How are the plans for the next programming period?**

The intervention for LEADER in the next programming period is already quite finalised. Based on an already good working system the aim was to put some improvements and simplifications in place, but not to define everything new. CLLD will be open for EFRD and there will be some convergence with the ESF. The LEADER network is working hard to raise the level for LEADER in the EAFRD from 5% to 7 or 8 %, and/or change the national co-financing rate from 80% to a lower rate. But in a widely spread pleading we also raised the voice for more legitimization of LEADER and its special status as development system. In Austria it is the plan to integrate Smart Village concept as much as possible in LEADER, one out of 4 main topics will also be environment, energy and climate – so there is a strong connection to the Green deal.



**Country:** Latvia

**Name of person interviewed:** Anita Seļicka,  
Latvian Rural Forum



## 1. How is your country/state working with LEADER/CLLD in this programming period?

In Latvia there are 35 local action groups (LAGs), out of which 6 are also FLAGs. In this programming period LEADER has allocated around 5% from EAFRD, and 10% from EMFF. There are more than 2000 projects implemented, and in economic project it has been estimated to reach 5 times higher results (working places) than planned for. There has been 64 transnational cooperation (TNC) projects from EAFRD and 8 from EMFF – these have created a lot of important added value, opened possibilities for innovation etc.

The first calls in this period that started in late spring 2016, and at the moment 93.8 % of all finances have already been implemented or approved. After one year of implementation, the decision process between PA and LAGs were changed. It used to be one official decision made and prepared by PA (of course, after LAGs selection and recommendations, but LAGs didn't send their decision – it was included in PA decision). Now it has been changed to two separate decisions – one made by LAG, another by PA. It has been changing also decision making body structures in LAGs, but overall at the moment mechanism and recognition of LAG is better, bureaucracy – bigger.

## 2. How will LEADER work in your country/state during the transition period?

Latvian Rural Forum has been in regular and close communication about the transition period with MA and PA whole 2020, despite of C19, which forced us to move all meetings with PA and MA to digital environment. Main discussion points have been on what is known from Europe and what would be the best for Latvia for the transition period, it worked both ways – we developed the needs from our side that discussed between LAGs, MA brought their and political agenda on the table.

Main points for EAFRD:

- The same percentage from EAFRD as for 2014-2020 is set for the transition period
- Transition period for [2] years, with known funding for each LAG, which allows LAGs to plan the work for 2021 [and 2022]. There are almost no finances left for project calls from 2014-2020 budget, but there are still funding for administrative work left from this period (even up to 70% for couple of LAGs) – it is planned to spend that funding for evaluating strategies, creating new strategies and if needed, this can be also moved to TNC projects of re-granting for projects, if LAG decides so.
- Transition period finances will be added to continue to implement existing strategies in the territories of existing LAGs in 2021[-2022]. LDS will be changed to include changes of results that should be reached and finances – planned in March/May, 2021.
- Approval from MA about new finances from transition period are expected May/June, 2021.
- Planned period for project implementation (from transition period money) – up to 1 June, 2025
- It will stay the same rate for State/EU co-financing, which for Latvia is much higher in this period than it will be for the next period. So a lot of total budget (as taken proportion from 2021-2027 budget) will be used in these two years, which leads to very high importance of smart decisions on where and how to implement on local level, knowing the existing challenges. It is also necessary to think about the huge goals (bioeconomy, digitalization etc.) for the next period and comparably small resources. Other Ministries are involved in the discussions on this.

EMMF:

In Latvia EAFRD is lead fund and all FLAGs have their administration covered. There is no transition period for EMMF, but in September, 2020 there were additional 10.4M € (from other measures) moved to CLLD, which is around 50% of what FLAGs had for this period, approved by Monitoring Committee with no opposition. It will ensure smoother transition between the periods. There has also been changes in the regulation (rising the maximum amount per project and a list of eligible activities), which may reduce the size of projects from SMEs and NGOs and rise the amount of projects from municipalities, which may be a potential threat to sustainable projects/demand, due to municipal elections in June, 2021.


In both funds it is very important to know all the practical answers for day-to-day questions



**European Leader Association  
for Rural Development**  
Brussels, [www.elard.eu](http://www.elard.eu)

**SWEDISH  
PRESIDENCY**  
2020-2021





regarding LAG administration, to feel safe and have information about the future, therefore we organize at least one meeting every four month with all involved stakeholders (LAG-MA-PA-LRF), weekly calls for LAGs to get to know worries, problems, needs etc., and regular calls between PA/MA-LRF on getting to know actual situation. LRF can provide information from different sources from NGO, ELARD, Horizont and other communities that are valuable to MA and PA, so it is win-win.

### **3.What is the outlook on how LEADER/CLLD will be engaged in the Next Generation fund?**

It seems that LEADER/CLLD won't be directly included in Next Generation fund, as at the moment it is more about the big overall concepts and less about practical implementation. It is planned at the Parliament and should still make a decision at the end of October on what is planned. For now requests from sectorial ministries are much higher than available funds – main goals besides the C19, is to create reforms via digitalisation mainly.

The requests include different digitalization platforms, support for SMEs to adapt digitalisation, F2F and other themes, where we see strong LAG involvement, like for resilience of regional and local food systems and shorten supply chains, which will be one of the themes and support fields for CLLD 2021-2027.

### **4. How are the plans for the next programming period?**

It is planned to double the percentage compared to this period– 10% from EARDF. New support frameworks available, if identified in LDS, like lump-sum support for smart villages, youth initiatives and business start-ups (lump sum, simpler rules etc.), food system and cooperation development, including green public procurement, public investments, all non-agricultural business support (diversification) from CAP in next period will be moved to CLLD.

From EMFF around 25% of the program for CLLD is planned.

ERDF seems to have no direct funding via LAGs (it was planned until the end of last year, but taken out due to cuts of the total State fund), but there will be program developed in order to link public investments (development of degraded areas, big public infrastructure project etc.) – linking timing of project calls and create synergies and adding value.

No funds and connection with ESF.

Planned simplification - costs of preparation of (building) projects, lump sum for administration, preparation for the strategies, catalogue of recommended prices for technique and building (used instead of complicated price comparison method).





New LAG and FLAG selection is planned in 2022 for CLLD strategies (EAFRD, EMFF).

Besides the funds – other initiatives have been adapted in regional development program, like participatory budgeting, smart villages and community planning as a part of territorial planning instruments. These are hot themes and new for implementation in all regions, where LRF and LAGs are key players and involved in framing regulations, implementation etc..



**European Leader Association  
for Rural Development**  
Brussels, [www.elard.eu](http://www.elard.eu)

**SWEDISH  
PRESIDENCY**  
2020-2021





**Country:** Czech Republic

**Name of person interviewed:** Radim Sršeň (Ph. D.),  
National Network of Local Action Groups of the Czech  
Republic

## 1. How is your country/state working with LEADER/CLLD in this programming period?

We are working with multifund using 3 funds (ERDF, EAFRD, ESF) in 5 operational programmes. The highest allocation is from ERDF through the Integrated Regional Operational Programme (8% of the OP), EAFRD through Rural Development Programme (5% from the OP) and ESF from the Operational Programme Employment (4% of the OP).

## 2. How will LEADER work in your country/state during the transition period?

The transition period for all programmes is foreseen only during 2021 and first half of 2022, thereafter first calls should be open by LAGs. The Rural Development Programme (RDP) should be an exception where it will be possible to use new money to implement the old strategies for 1-2 years. In this moment the process of approval of LAGs for new programming period ("standardisation") is running, the first 40 LAGs are already approved, and LAGs are preparing new strategies. The call for submitting new strategies is foreseen to be opened in March 2021. There should be 6 (one more) Operational Programmes implemented through CLLD in 2021-2027. LAG running costs are covered for the whole transition period (up to 2023, depends how LAGs planned the budget, given amount could be planned for variable number of years) from the current programming period 2014-20



**European Leader Association  
for Rural Development**  
Brussels, [www.elard.eu](http://www.elard.eu)

**SWEDISH  
PRESIDENCY**  
2020-2021





### 3. What is the outlook on how LEADER/CLLD will be engaged in the Next Generation fund?

We are just negotiating, it is probable that we will use CLLD in ReactEU and extra allocation given to RDP, we are negotiating to use it also in Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) for digitalisation (schools, public authorities etc.) and Just Transition Fund (JTF).

### 4. How are the plans for the next programming period?

Some issues mentioned already above. There should be allocation:

- 8% from the Integrated Regional Operational Programme (ERDF). The OP will have 20-30% bigger allocation than in current period, as it covers almost 70% of LAGs' allocation, LAGs will have also higher allocation than 2014-2020.
- 5% from the Rural Development Programme (EAFRD) + role in FARM TO FORK
- Operational Programme Employment (ESF) - negotiating the allocation
- Operational Programme Technologies and Applications for Competitiveness - negotiating the allocation - support of innovations in SMEs - GREEN DEAL
- Operational Programme Environment - negotiating the allocation - GREEN DEAL
- Operational Programme John Amos Comenius - focus on education, LAGs as implementing bodies (administration, animation) of Local Action Plans for Education

Financing should be 85-90%, 10-15% co-financing - both for project implementation and LAGs' running costs.





STAATSMINISTERIUM FÜR  
REGIONALENTWICKLUNG



Freistaat  
**SACHSEN**



**Country:** Saxony, Germany

**Name of person interviewed:** Mr Andreas Griess, Head of Unit, Saxon State Ministry for Regional Development

## 1. How is your country/state working with LEADER/CLLD in this programming period?

We have a multifund-approach in Saxony with EARDF and EMFF. Subsequently 8 of the 30 Saxon LAGS are recognized as a LAG in EARDF and EMFF. So EARDF is financing the running costs and animation. Stakeholders of the EMFF are member of the LAG and the decision making body. The advantages are synergy effects because of the similar topics, for instance connection of rural economy and tourism, which is related with EARDF as well as the EMFF.

On the other hand, this also spares the LAGs from too many rules. If the LAGs would need to handle more than one fund, they would have a much heavier bureaucracy (a leading fund in the new funding period is a challenging option - or better a real problem to install, but that is another topic). That is why our target was to provide the LAGs one set of rules with enough money (40% of EARDF provides about 14 Mio. €/LAG/funding period in average and – in case – of a FLAG, an additional budget from EMFF amounting to about 0,3 Mi. €/FLAG) and a maximum of freedom to choose their topics and their funding conditions (there are plenty of overlaps in the content of the funds).

## 2. How will LEADER work in your country/state during the transition period?

In Saxony we will use the opportunities of the transition period in the EARDF. The current state of approval of the origin budget from EARDF 2014 – 2020 is 89%, but that from LAGs are 97%. At the same time the LAGs are preparing the new LEADER Development strategies. As a first step the former LAGs and possible new stakeholders are informed to articulate their interest for working on a strategy until 31st of March in 2021. The plan



**European Leader Association  
for Rural Development**  
Brussels, [www.elard.eu](http://www.elard.eu)

**SWEDISH  
PRESIDENCY**  
2020-2021





is to connect the rural and the maritime funds again. But there will be no lead fund. The amount of funding still depends on the decisions on European, national and Saxon level. We hope we can arrange a funding level at least up to 2023 nearly similar to the current funding period.

### **3. What is the outlook on how LEADER/CLLD will be engaged in the Next Generation fund?**

We are still waiting for the decisions on European, national and Saxon level. There are overlaps between LEADER and the Next Generation Fund for the contents climate change and covid19-resilience, but the discussions are on-going. We have to find practical solutions. In my opinion it's an impertinence to confront the LAGs with all possible budgets from all possible funds – the connections between them and the rules are at present time incomprehensible enough even for the members of the MA.

### **4. How are the plans for the next programming period?**

Our Plan is to continue with the successful approach of LEADER in Saxony. This means that we will introduce no given targets and measures to the LAGs by the MA. But, with such a high percentage of EARDF for LEADER, we will still have to keep the goals of the funds, meaning the indicators in mind: if it's not possible to achieve the goals of the funds because of the high budget for LEADER we have to discuss with the LAGs how they can contribute. Nevertheless we will improve our existing Simplified Cost Options, for instance our standard unit costs for investments in reconstruction of heated buildings as well as our flat rates - 40% for the remaining costs for the LAG management including animation.



**European Leader Association  
for Rural Development**  
Brussels, [www.elard.eu](http://www.elard.eu)

**SWEDISH  
PRESIDENCY**  
2020-2021





# “Good Practice in using **LEADER/CLLD** as a multilevel governance tool”

[www.elard.eu](http://www.elard.eu)



**European Leader Association  
for Rural Development**  
Brussels, [www.elard.eu](http://www.elard.eu)

**SWEDISH  
PRESIDENCY**  
2020-2021

