



European Leader Association
for Rural Development
Brussels, www.elard.eu

FRENCH
PRESIDENCY
2023-2024



PRESS RELEASE

7th October 2024, Poitiers

At the 2024 European LEADER Congress, over 440 representatives from 27 EU Member States and candidate countries gathered to launch cooperation for the 2021-2027 EAFRD funding under the Common Agricultural Policy.

On the 2nd and 3rd October, took place in Poitiers at the Futuroscope, the second European LEADER Congress organized by ELARD. After last year's successful event within the premises of the European institutions and focusing on LEADER's future post 2027, this year's edition was dedicated to Cooperation. The aim of this year's event was to connect, find partners or projects, get ideas and feedback from experts.

Over 440 participants from all over the European union and beyond gathered to participate into hands on sessions about the do's and don'ts of cooperation projects, the life cycle of cooperation, how to cooperate with countries that are not part of the EU, how to get the best out of your partnership for instance. Participants shared their experience, advised each other, and connected beyond the regular links they can create on their territories thanks to the Cooperation Fair.

High level speakers, experts, politician leaders and EU institutions representatives answered once more to the invitation, showcasing the importance of Cooperation within the LEADER program.

After introductory speeches by ELARD president, Mr. Thibaut Guignard, representatives from the Poitiers area, the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Region and Roberto Berutti, member of the Cabinet of the Commission's commissioner for agriculture and rural areas, took place the ceremony for the best cooperation projects of the 2014-2020 programming period. 4 projects were awarded (the People's Choice Award, thanks to the online vote of the public, and the 3 Jury's Choices Award) gathering together more than 20 partners throughout Europe, and winners shared not only their tips and best practice, but also what made projects special – human connections.

It is the project **Tierra Minera**, uniting 6 LAG's from four provinces across three different regions of Spain creating a robust network of stakeholders committed to cultural preservation and tourism innovation, that won the People's Choice Award. The first prize for the Jury's Choices Award is the project **5StarNature**, which joins 4 European countries (Finland, Spain, Estonia and Italy). The second award goes to **Flourishing Destinations** project, and the third award goes to the project **Boergondische Buren**, which aims to the shared Burgundian heritage and agricultural traditions by strengthening cross-border cooperation between farmers, local producers, entrepreneurs, and communities in the border region between Belgium and the Netherlands. All the winning projects can be found on the [dedicated page of the competition](#).

On the second day, 12 parallel sessions took place to exchange best practises on some topics aforementioned such as practical aspects of cooperation for the period 2021-2027, cooperating with countries that are not part of the EU, things to do and to avoid while setting-up and implementing cooperation projects for instance. More political discussions also took place such as how LEADER cooperation is contributing to the EU rural vision. This second day was also driven by the Cooperation Fair where several activities were proposed: participants gathered by cooperation topics around roundtables to find ideas, projects and partners. A helpdesk was also set up where participants could ask any kind of questions to experts. A wall for cooperation was also organised and more than 70 Local Action Groups advertised projects and found project partners.

This Congress took place in the context of the start of the 2021-2027 programming period of the EAFRD. It will allow Local Action Groups throughout Europe to implement one of the seven principles of the LEADER approach: cooperation.

The LEADER approach

LEADER (Liaison Between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy) is a European rural development programme. Created in 1991 as a complement to the first pillar of the CAP in order to support the transformation and diversification of rural areas, it now is a cross-cutting axis of its second pillar. The LEADER programme, with a minimum budget of 5% from the EAFRD, is the only European programme dedicated to supporting rural development projects. It supports projects that are part of a local strategy for the development of rural areas, developed and supported by a Local Action Group (LAG). These groups bring together public actors (ex. elected representatives of local authorities) and private actors (ex. companies, cooperatives, or associations). It allows local actors to define priorities and actions at their level (bottom-up approach), rather than having ready-made measures imposed on them.

ELARD

ELARD is a European association that represents nearly 2,600 Local Action Groups (LAGs) from 29 countries, including countries in the European Union's neighbourhood, which have adopted and implement the LEADER methodology for local development by local actors.

We are actively working to make the LEADER approach better known among European decision-makers in order to guarantee its funding in European rural development policies. We support actor-led local development and represent the interests of LAGs to national governments and European institutions.

Since 1 January 2023, ELARD has been chaired by the French network, Leader France, which actively worked, during the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2022, to promote the place of rural areas in European policies. The French Presidency of this European network is an opportunity for France, at the initiative of the programme in the 1990s, to promote LEADER and, more broadly, local development by local actors.

Contact :

ELARD Aisbl at LEADER France Association

Mairie de Plœuc-L'Hermitage Place Louis Morel 22 150 Plœuc-L'Hermitage

Tél : (+33) 06.61.48.02.03

Thibaut.guignard@elard.eu

www.elard.eu