

IMPLEMENTATION THE LEADER/CLLD APPROACH IN UKRAINE

**Guidebook and methodological
recommendations**

2025

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The recommendations provided support the implementation of the LEADER method in Ukraine, enabling the development of systemic actions to introduce the LEADER approach as a concept in the practice of rural communities in Ukraine.

@ Latvian Rural Advisory and Education Centre, 2025.

@ National Association of Agricultural Advisory Services of Ukraine, 2025

Main acronyms and abbreviations

CLLD – community-led local development

CPR – Common Provision Regulation

CSP – Common Strategic Plan

EAFRD – European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

EFF – European Fisheries Fund

EMFF – European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

ERDF – European Regional Development Fund

ESF – European Social Fund

ESI – Funds European Structural and Investment Funds (EAFRD, EMFF, ERDF, ESF and Cohesion Fund)

EU – European Union

FARNET – European Fisheries Areas Network

FLAG – Fisheries Local Action Group

LAG – local action group

LDS – local development strategy

LEADER – *Liaisons entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale*

MA – managing authority

SMEs – Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

CAP SP – Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan

RDP - Rural Development Programme

Table of Contents

Main acronyms and abbreviations	3
Table of Contents	4
Introduction	6
1. What is the LEADER Initiative?.....	8
Historical Development of the LEADER Initiative	9
What does LEADER/CLLD offer rural residents?	11
The seven values underlying the LEADER approach.....	12
2. LEADER ADDED VALUE	16
What does the LEADER added value concept entail?	17
3. The main conditions for the implementation of the LEADER approach laid down by the European Commission	21
CLLD delivery system	27
How to coordinate with other funds?	29
4. Main conditions for the implementation of the LEADER approach in Latvia	32
Institutions involved in the implementation of the LEADER approach in Latvia	34
Procedure for administration	35
Local Action Groups (LAGs) across Latvia.....	36
Selection criteria for LAGs	44
Conditions for support for Local Action Groups	47
Administrative Manager in the LAG	48
Structure of the community-led local development strategy.....	49
Selection criteria for a local development strategy.....	51
Implementation of the LEADER measure	52
Activity "Initiatives to strengthen the local economy" (business projects).....	53
Activity "Community strengthening and local development initiatives" (public benefit initiatives)	55
Evaluation of LEADER projects	56
Organisation for the representation of the interests of LAGs	59
5. Practical steps for starting the implementation of LEADER as a method in Ukraine.....	61
Roadmap for the implementation of the LEADER/CLLD programme (national level)	62

Practical steps for the implementation of community-led local development in local areas (local level).....	63
Binding legislation	76

Introduction

The LEADER method offers practical solutions to pressing challenges faced by rural areas. With the rapid development of agricultural technologies, the demand for manual labor in rural regions is decreasing, and fewer people are earning a livelihood from traditional farming. This trend can be observed worldwide. To prevent further economic decline in rural territories and the mass migration of people from these areas, a targeted national rural policy is essential.

Initiatives such as LEADER can make a significant contribution by promoting diversification of the rural economy. However, this is only one of the necessary directions. It is equally important to prepare local populations for change and innovation. Experience from both EU countries and beyond shows that development funds are used effectively only when the target groups themselves feel responsible for the development process.

At the heart of the LEADER approach are **Local Action Groups (LAGs)** – representatives of various institutions who jointly take responsibility for local development. Their goal is to mobilize local resources and people, support the introduction of new economic and social development directions in rural areas, and facilitate a successful transition period. Typically, a single settlement is not strong enough to implement such changes on its own – broader cooperation between territories is required. For the LEADER approach to bear fruit, a stable and long-term collaboration must be established between neighboring areas, as well as between local communities and national or regional institutions. This cooperation enhances communication and coordination, and LEADER serves as a key mechanism for strengthening connections between different development actors.

A fundamental prerequisite for LEADER is **the partnership between municipalities, entrepreneurs, and civil society representatives**. Only through close cooperation is it possible to unlock local resources and direct them toward a common goal – rural development. Economic growth in rural areas cannot be achieved if rural residents are represented solely by public institutions, without being involved in decision-making themselves.

To improve cooperation and increase local participation, it is necessary to develop training programs, improve communication, create a shared vision for the future, and seek and implement projects. Both existing and prospective entrepreneurs should be involved in the planning and implementation of local projects. **Here, a significant role is played by local activists, civic organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), whose work aims to improve the quality of life in rural areas.**

In summary, the main objective of the LEADER method is to promote rural development by creating new jobs, diversifying the economy, and improving quality of life. To achieve this, it is necessary to:

- foster territorial cooperation between surrounding rural areas and settlements to concentrate their development potential;

- establish partnerships between municipalities, entrepreneurs, and civil society.

LEADER helps build cohesive rural communities, promotes the growth of small businesses, and provides access to social services. A wide range of LEADER programs and thousands of local strategies have already improved living conditions in many EU rural areas and helped reduce social disparities between regions.

The foundation of the LEADER methodology is **a place-based approach and active citizen participation**. It strengthens the potential of local “developers” and encourages the creation of innovative projects. This approach enables local communities to rediscover their values and enrich them with new technologies and knowledge.

This document will not answer all the questions you will encounter when starting to implement LEADER as an approach and programme in Ukraine. However, it provides the main steps and explanations to do so in line with European practice, although there are differences between Member States.

1. WHAT IS THE LEADER INITIATIVE?

LEADER consists of purposeful and mutually coordinated activities aimed at promoting and implementing rural development within local rural communities. One of the core principles of the LEADER approach is the “bottom-up” method, where initiatives are driven by local residents and entrepreneurs who actively participate in identifying and addressing the problems of their territory.

LEADER vision – A rural people living in the countryside who are satisfied with life and able to fulfill their economic and social needs as close to their place of residence as possible.

The Core of LEADER – To enhance the quality of life in rural areas by focusing on economic growth, social well-being, and environmental preservation.

LEADER promotes:

- Local initiatives and cooperation;
- Innovative solutions for rural development;
- Partnerships between the public, private, and civil society sectors.

Goals – to encourage and support individuals directly connected to rural areas, helping them plan the future of their territories, and promoting the implementation of integrated, high-quality, and original strategies created by local communities to ensure sustainable territorial development.

The LEADER approach includes:

- Empowering local residents to:
 - **Define local** development priorities
 - **Participate** in decision-making
 - **Mobilize** resources to address local challenges.
- Establishing Local Action Groups (LAGs) where local residents form partnerships with local governments (including state institutions), entrepreneurs (including farmers), non-governmental organizations (including women’s and youth groups);
- Partnerships that:
 - Develop local development strategies based on residents’ needs;
 - Agree upon and define shared local development priorities;
 - Decide whether submitted projects align with the local development strategy;
- Seeking new solutions and approaches to existing development challenges,

- Fostering cooperation among organizations at the local, national, and international levels,
- Creating a network of Local Action Group partnerships.

Key Elements of the LEADER Approach is **Partnership, i.e. the Local Action Group (LAG), a Local Development Strategy and a defined rural territory.**

Historical Development of the LEADER Initiative

LEADER (French: *Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale* – link between actions (or activities) for the development of the rural economy) has been operating in many European countries since 1991.

In the early 1990s, the LEADER approach was introduced as an experiment in response to what was then considered the failure of traditional top-down policies to address the problems faced by many rural regions in Europe. The main idea was to unleash the energy and resources of local people and organizations from the public, private and civil sectors, enabling and empowering them to shape the development of their region through partnerships operating as Local Action Groups (LAGs). LAG partnerships are the main instrument for implementing the LEADER approach, involving local representatives, leading the development and implementation of local strategies, as well as decision-making and resource allocation.

Why was the LEADER/CLLD approach created?

- European rural areas were facing **demographic, economic, and social challenges.**
- A more effective and **flexible approach** based on the needs of local communities was needed.
- Experience showed that **centralized solutions** often failed to fully support **rural development.**

Since then, LEADER/CLLD has proven its effectiveness, becoming one of the most successful local development instruments in Europe.

The first generation of LEADER was introduced as a European Union (EU) Community initiative, i.e. a specific financial instrument of the EU's common structural policy, with the aim of finding new solutions to specific problems affecting the whole of the EU. During its experimental phase from 1991 to 1993, LEADER involved 217 districts in certain disadvantaged rural areas and was able to draw on several EU funds. It focused on disadvantaged rural areas during LEADER II from 1994 to 1999, when the number of local action groups grew to around 900. The encouraging results then led to the approach being further expanded under LEADER+

(2000–2006) to cover all types of rural areas and to apply a 'thematic' element to local strategies. This approach was 'integrated' in its fourth programming period (2007–2013), where it was an integral part of EU rural development policy, covering 2 416 rural areas in all Member States. It was financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and is a mandatory component of all rural development programmes. In 2007, the method was also expanded thematically to include fisheries policy, with the creation of more than 300 fisheries local action groups (FLAGs) in 21 Member States. This involved direct links between coastal rural areas and several LEADER local action groups.

In the 2014–2020 funding period, the applicability of the LEADER approach was further expanded as "community-led local development" or CLLD in rural, fisheries and urban areas. To put it simply, until now, LEADER meant rural development. By adding "community-led local development" or CLLD, the approach is being expanded with support from other funds. This is a term used by the European Commission to describe an approach that completely reverses traditional top-down development policies. CLLD could be applied within the EAFRD (as LEADER), the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Where Member State programming allowed, local action groups could also prepare and implement integrated strategies using several funds. Despite the range of funding options available, LEADER local action groups and their activities in rural areas remain the main vehicle for the LEADER approach.

From 2024, the latest generation of LEADER will continue to address challenges and seize opportunities in rural areas within the framework of the new strategic plans of the 27 Member States and their Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). As LEADER has evolved, so too have the mechanisms to support this approach; formal network structures emerged early in its development, reflecting its partnership and territorial focus. Since the initial LEADER Observatory began operating, LEADER networking has continued to develop during the 2014-2020 period, providing technical support and other networking services to local action groups through national rural networks and [the European Rural Network](#) by providing technical support and other network services to local action groups through national rural networks and [the European Rural Development Network](#).

LEADER Concept: Timeline & Key Milestones

1991 – LEADER I	Pilot phase introduced by the European Commission.
	Tested the bottom-up approach for rural development.
	~200 LAGs across Europe.
1994–1999 – LEADER II	Expanded to include networking, innovation, and transnational cooperation .
	Over 1,000 LAGs.
	Introduction of the European LEADER Observatory .

2000–2006 – LEADER+	Focus on innovation in rural development.
	Strengthened transnational cooperation .
	~900 LAGs involved.
2007–2013 – Mainstreaming into Rural Development Policy	LEADER becomes a mainstream method under EU's Rural Development Programs (RDPs) .
	Integrated into Axis 4 of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).
	LEADER principles applied more broadly.
2014–2020 – Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)	LEADER continues under RDP but also extended to other EU funds (e.g., ERDF, ESF, EMFF).
	Promotes multi-fund strategies and urban-rural cooperation.
2021–2027 – Current Phase	Further emphasis on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart villages • Climate resilience • Digital transformation
	Simplification and broader support for local innovation and green strategies.

What does LEADER/CLLD offer rural residents?

LEADER is an approach that differs from traditional funding programs in that it provides guidance on "how" to operate rather than "what" to do. Thus, **the implementation process is just as important as the numerical results to be achieved.**

What does LEADER/CLLD offer rural residents?

1. The opportunity to determine the direction of rural development themselves by participating in identifying the needs of rural areas and making decisions on the support required for specific rural development ideas (projects).
2. The opportunity to implement local development projects aimed at improving the quality of life in a specific rural area.
3. A new perspective on rural living conditions and the opportunity to create or improve the services needed by rural residents as close to their place of residence as possible. To take care of the preservation and sustainable use of the culture, natural environment and traditions characteristic of rural areas.

4. To create a sense of belonging and pride in one's territory and to increase opportunities in rural areas. Provide opportunities to expand local knowledge, motivation, and resources and use them to improve the quality of life.
5. New entrepreneurs who want to start their own business in rural areas can take advantage of several opportunities to implement their creative ideas. The LEADER approach is designed to help young entrepreneurs take their first steps.

IN SUMMARY, LEADER/CLLD gives rural residents the opportunity to actively participate in the development of their living environment by setting priorities and implementing projects that improve their quality of life. It promotes the involvement of local residents, strengthens their sense of belonging and creates new opportunities for entrepreneurship, especially for young entrepreneurs. This approach also supports the preservation and sustainable use of rural cultural and natural heritage, thus creating a viable and future-oriented rural area.

The seven values underlying the LEADER approach

The LEADER approach is based on seven specific values or characteristics, and its success depends on the presence and combined use of all these characteristics. These seven characteristics define LEADER as a methodology, distinguishing it from traditional funding programs. Thus, **the implementation process is as important as the numerical results to be achieved**. Unlike more traditional policy measures, it provides guidance on "how" to operate rather than "what" to do.



The LEADER/CLLD approach consists of seven complementary principles

1. **Bottom-up strategy development and implementation** – local implementers develop the strategy and select the actions to be implemented. The bottom-up approach is at the heart of the LEADER approach, where local people are the best experts to drive the development of their area. Using a bottom-up approach means that local communities and other local actors can define and determine the development path of their area in line with their needs, expectations and plans. The use of a collective (or partnership) approach with delegated decision-making responsibilities allows them to take responsibility for the future of their territory. They make decisions on the local development strategy and the selection of priorities to be implemented. Active, fair and transparent participation is encouraged at every stage of the partnership building and strategy development, implementation and review process.
2. **Public-private partnership: local action groups (LAGs)** – a balanced group comprising public and private sector actors who can mobilise all available skills and resources. Direct involvement in such a partnership means that people themselves become active partners and drivers of development in their area, which is a key feature of the LEADER approach. All partnerships are unique; no two partnerships are the same in terms of their origins or development. Partnerships are also dynamic and require time, effort and commitment to build trust in order to meet the needs and realities of the local context. The local action group must include public, private and civil society partners (from local authorities (including public institutions), entrepreneurs (including farmers), non-governmental organizations (including women's and youth groups); it should be balanced and broadly representative of local interests and the various socio-economic sectors in the specific territory. No single interest group can control decision-making within the local partnership.

Although the legal form of LAGs may vary from country to country, they are often registered as non-profit organizations. Regardless of their legal form, LAGs can appoint a suitable partner to act as the official responsible body. In many cases, this will be an organization with sufficient capacity to support the LAG's activities.

3. **Innovation** – LEADER can play an important role in promoting new innovative approaches to rural development. The search for innovation has been one of the fundamental principles of LEADER from the very beginning and remains one of the most exciting, revolutionary and yet challenging parts of the whole approach. LAGs focus on finding and promoting new and innovative solutions to local problems together with local residents, or on identifying and exploiting opportunities or challenges. Innovation refers to the types of activities carried out and supported, the products or services developed, etc., but it also refers to how things are done and how local residents are involved. Each LAG should strive to be creative and introduce new elements and solutions in the development of its territory and in the work of

the partnership. This applies to its strategy and its implementation, in particular to approaches to stimulation, decision-making and project selection. Innovation will always involve acceptable risk, but by creating the right conditions and carefully developing new and fresh ideas, LAGs can bring about significant and lasting change and benefits in their territories, in many ways the real added value that LEADER is intended to achieve.

4. **Networking** – sharing achievements, experiences, and knowledge among people, organizations, and institutions at the local, regional, national, and European levels. Networking is super important for implementing the LEADER approach. The LAG is a network of local partners and, through its strategy and activities, promotes links between local actors and others in the development chain and territory. Networking allows all those involved to promote inclusion, build capacity and strengthen capabilities, providing those involved with the critical mass to share their knowledge, experience, innovations and ideas. The benefits of networking LEADER extend far beyond the immediate location, as LEADER networks expand at regional, national and international level to stimulate and support cooperation between LAGs.
5. **Cooperation** – LEADER promotes cooperation between territories, both nationally and internationally, to jointly address problems or develop joint projects. Inter-territorial and transnational cooperation gives a broader dimension to local development in rural areas and is supported through network structures. Cooperation goes beyond networking, involving local residents and local action groups in working with others to implement a joint project. This may involve other LEADER groups or a similarly constituted group in another region, EU Member State or non-EU country. Cooperation activities may involve funding from different funds. Cooperation activities must have a clear objective and benefits that result from working with others. Cooperation with other regions can be an excellent source of innovation and knowledge transfer for local residents. LEADER cooperation allows for the introduction of new perspectives or insights into successful approaches and good practices in other areas. Although the benefits of cooperation can be significant, it is important to plan carefully (e.g. choosing the right topics, partners, etc.).
6. **Local development strategy in a specific area** – activities take place in a small, homogeneous, socially unified area. The area forms the basis for the development of local partnerships and strategies, linking them in a unified approach and creating a positive vision of what could be achieved through active partnerships between local stakeholders. In accordance with the "territorial approach," LEADER funding is allocated to target the (strategic) priorities of the territory, rather than specific projects or groups of projects. Each LEADER area usually covers a small, socially and functionally cohesive and clearly defined or homogeneous area. Such areas may be characterised by shared traditions, local identity, a sense of belonging or common needs and aspirations. The area chosen by the partners must

also demonstrate sufficient coherence and critical mass in terms of human, financial and economic resources to support a viable local development strategy. A shared territorial focus enables the local partnership to work together to identify and address local strengths, challenges and opportunities, mobilising the internal potential and resources of the territory itself.

7. **Integrated and multi-sectoral strategy** – the LEADER approach promotes projects that combine different sectors (e.g. tourism, social services, local economy) and address issues in a comprehensive rather than narrow way. No specific sector is specified, so the LEADER strategy must be multidisciplinary. The seven key features of the LEADER approach explain what this approach is. Putting these principles into practice means that real people are involved in developing local strategies and measures. When preparing a local development strategy, the LAG examines and addresses the needs and opportunities of the area in an integrated manner. In this way, it helps to achieve the desired common goals with clearly linked and coordinated actions and projects. Integrated does not mean comprehensive, as some things will be outside the scope of local action or ability to influence or deliver. When preparing their development strategies, local action groups make choices and focus on those objectives and actions that create added value and are most likely to contribute to achieving the desired change.

IN SUMMARY, the LEADER approach is based on seven complementary values (and **its success depends on the presence and combined use of all these features!**), which ensure sustainable, targeted and community-based rural development. It strengthens citizen participation by enabling locals to determine their own development directions (bottom-up), build balanced public-private partnerships, introduce innovations, and collaborate both locally and internationally. The LEADER approach allows for the creation of locally based strategies and the resolution of problems in an integrated and multidisciplinary context, linking local potential with common goals. This method not only promotes economic and social development, but also strengthens local identity and community capacity in the long term.

2. LEADER ADDED VALUE

LEADER as a tool for rural development has been known in Latvia and has been used for almost 20 years. In the EU, on the other hand, this approach dates back to 1991, when LEADER was launched as a pilot initiative to enhance the potential of rural development by attracting local initiatives and knowledge and disseminating this knowledge to other rural areas.

Thanks to successful results, starting from 2007, this instrument (also known as CLLD or community-led local development) is also used in Latvia for the development of areas of importance for fisheries.

Many success stories are known about the LEADER approach and projects that have helped to create [new businesses](#), develop [new products](#), create jobs, improve [access to services](#) in rural areas, improve [the environment for people with reduced mobility](#) and public infrastructure of [importance for the local community](#), support [the preservation of cultural heritage and traditions](#), creating [new opportunities for young people](#), improving the [availability of natural resources](#) and their sustainable use in rural areas of Latvia.

LEADER stakeholders (project implementers, members of LAGs and representatives of decision-making bodies) stress that this is a unique opportunity for local people (associations, entrepreneurs) to implement their ideas and to realise the needs identified in local strategies themselves. It is also believed that, thanks to the LEADER approach, the opportunities offered by Europe are closer to the citizens.

At the same time, LEADER initiatives are scrutinised (e.g. [European Court of Auditors, National Audit Office](#)), asking: what exactly makes it better than other initiatives co-financed by the EU in rural areas and on the coast? What is LEADER added value? For example, in 2022, the European Court of Auditors, when assessing whether this approach provides benefits justifying additional costs and risks, found that improvements have been made in some areas compared to the previous report more than 10 years ago, and the LEADER approach promotes local level involvement. However, there is still little evidence that the benefits outweigh the associated costs and risks.

In the EU, **the added value of LEADER/CLLD** is defined as the benefits achieved by the appropriate application of this method compared to the benefits that would be obtained if this method were not used. Added value can take the form of improved social capital, improved governance and better results in the implementation of strategies compared to actions implemented without this method. The figure, which schematically shows **the concept of this added value**, shows that it also contributes to structural changes in the LAG's area of activity.

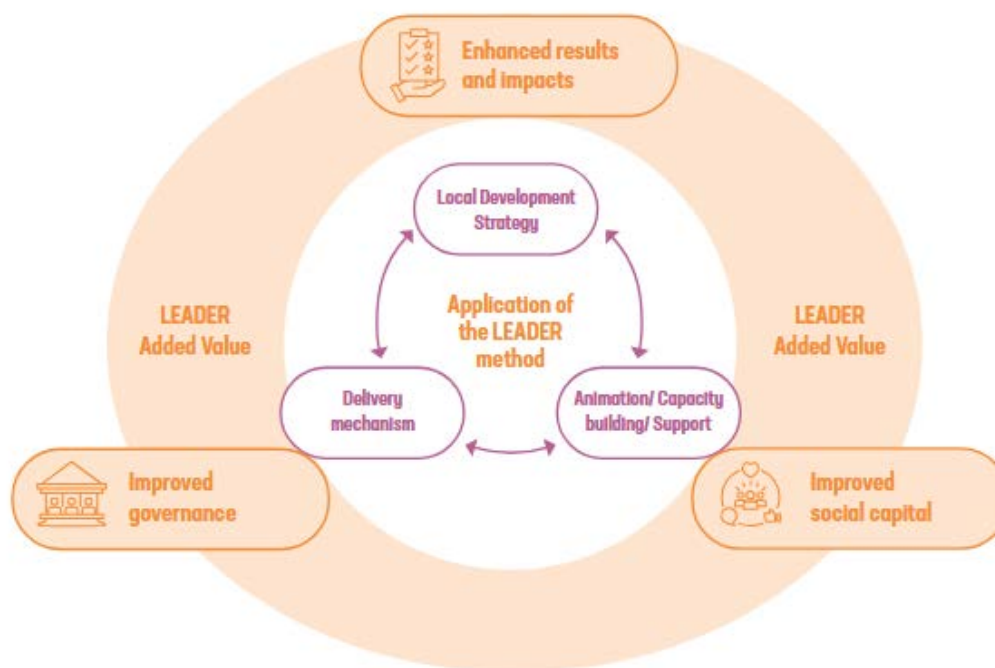
What does the LEADER added value concept entail?

The following tools are available for the implementation of LEADER: 1. A dedicated implementation framework that provides for the association of local organisations (associations, entrepreneurs, municipalities) in partnership and empowers it to take decisions on the investment of public funds in the implementation of specific local needs. 2. A local development strategy in which the local population identifies the most pressing local needs and defines the development goals to be achieved in order to realise these needs. The local community (entrepreneurs, associations, municipalities) is involved in the implementation of the strategy. 3. Activation actions carried out by the LAG to involve different groups of the population in the LEADER implementation process, so that the local community, especially those who have not yet been actively involved in local development processes, has the appropriate information, knowledge and skills to meaningfully engage and address current local needs, which are interlinked and complementary: 1. a bottom-up approach; 2. territorial approach; 3. local partnerships (e.g. LAGs); 4. an integrated and multidisciplinary strategy; 5. innovation; 6. networking; 7. territorial cooperation.

The added value of LEADER is reflected in improved governance. First of all, it is local governance, or the ability of society to organise and bring together local organisations and citizens. This is reflected in the number of LAG members and their diversity. Participatory and inclusive decision-making is important in local governance, so the added value comes from existing knowledge and skills that help to make such decisions, as well as to successfully coordinate other processes relevant to local development.

Improved governance is evidenced by LAG activation activities that motivate and help to involve local populations more qualitatively in the design and implementation of the strategy, especially those who have not participated so far for various reasons.

Improved local governance is evidenced by active communication with the local population about the LAG's work, the projects implemented, support opportunities and other opportunities for participation. However, improved governance is not limited to the local level. For example, in Latvia, national level players are also involved in the implementation of the measures, such as [the Ministry of Agriculture](#), [the Rural Support Service](#) (Paying Agency), [the State CAP Network](#), [the association "Latvian Rural Forum"](#) as a national LAG platform. Improved governance is evidence of the ability of these players and the LAGs to cooperate constructively, such as the extent to which the Ministry of Agriculture respects the LAG's suggestions in the drafting of Cabinet regulations concerning LEADER.



Added value of LEADER

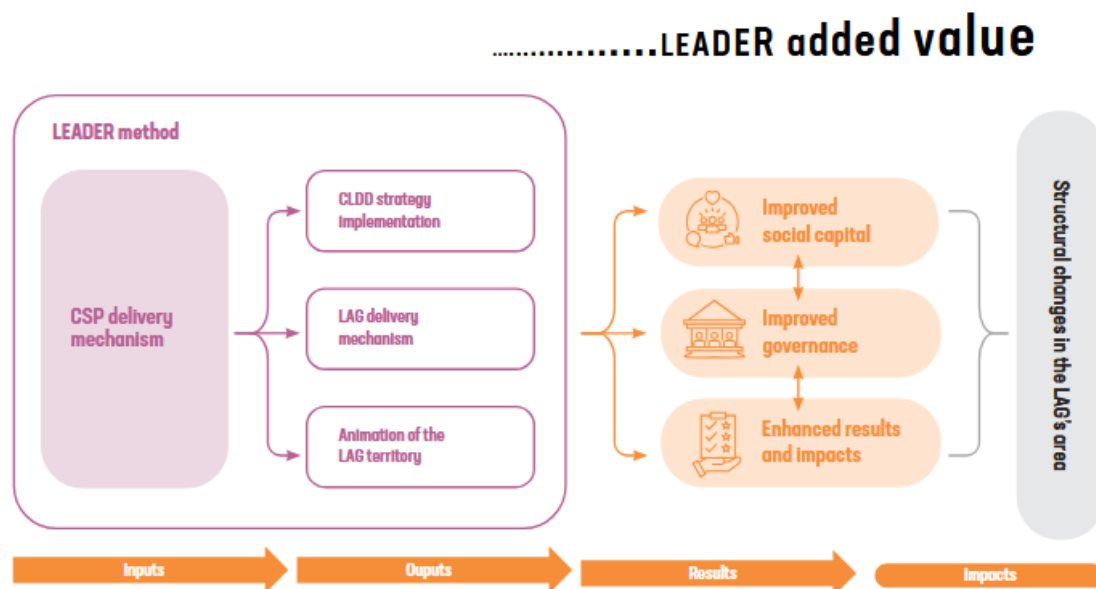
Social capital is an important element of LEADER's added value. Improved social capital is evidenced by the existence of different networks in the LAG's area of activity and the quality of their operation. Firstly, the LAG itself is a network of local organisations. The active activity of its members and the implementation of common intentions testifies to the quality of the LAG as a network. The LAG also encourages local entrepreneurs, non-governmental organisations, local authorities to network or implement joint initiatives in order to solve a local problem. For example, [the creation of a support system](#) to improve the competitiveness of local producers. They can also be cooperation networks that are created as a result of interterritorial cooperation projects. For example, in Latvia, "[Sēlijas salas](#)", created in 17 small settlements of Sēlija, in order to create a thematic tourism offer in cooperation with local community activists. These and many other examples of networking are the result of improved social capital in the LAG's areas of activity.

Mutual trust in building cooperation is just as important as networks. This is noticeable when local people are involved in the development of the strategy, participating in discussions, expressing current needs. The trust of the local population is evidenced by their active involvement in the implemented activities, cooperation in the development and implementation of joint projects. Likewise, the extent to which citizens believe and trust the decisions taken by the LAGs on the projects to be supported is a testament to the social capital in the territory.

The LAG's work in building common values and understanding of the identity and visions of the territory makes an important contribution to improving local social capital. Each area has its own unique story and vision of its place and its development potential.

The set of these actions, the implementation system, the activation measures, the participatory local development strategy create the conditions for projects implemented under CLLD strategies to produce **better results**. They are, for example, more closely linked to local needs, as the LAG's role is to support projects that address local needs in the best possible way. Such projects also provide more sustainable solutions as they build on local resources and knowledge, attract new necessary resources to the area, create jobs that are essential for the local economy, create services needed by the local community and enhance the potential of the area.

At the same time, in order to produce better results, the LAG's role is to act strategically and support projects in order to address as many of the needs identified in the strategies as possible. Better results are shown by projects offering innovative solutions of local relevance. An essential aspect of the added value of LEADER is the establishment of links between the projects carried out, with a view to ensuring that the results of the projects are strategically complementary, for example by supporting projects that create new products in the area and, at the same time, by implementing projects that promote market outlets for these and other local products. Finally, the skills and experience gained, the projects implemented and the strategic vision for the development of the territory create a so-called leverage effect, or the LAG's ability to attract new resources to the operational area and the implementation of the strategy.



Source: Adapted from the European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development (2017)

The road to structural change in the LAG's territory

All in all, all this contributes to significant changes in the LAG's area of activity. They may be related to demographic aspects, such as opportunities for young people/young families to live and work in a rural area. These can be changes related to economic aspects, such as the creation of new markets or the creation of additional income for the local population. In my opinion, the fundamental change that LEADER is making in rural areas is improving the resilience/safety capacity of the community, which is important in today's changing circumstances.

IN SUMMARY, LEADER is a community-led method of local development that has become an essential tool for rural and coastal development in the EU and almost 20 years in Latvia for more than 30 years. It promotes the participation, strategic thinking and use of resources by local communities, based on seven interrelated principles (bottom-up approach, local partnerships, territorial cooperation, etc.). **The added value of LEADER is reflected in improved local governance and social capital** – involving different members of society, developing local networks, strengthening trust and building the identity of the territory. It also promotes better quality, sustainable and responsive projects that contribute to structural change in territories, such as creating new markets, attracting resources and strengthening community resilience. Although quantitative evidence of the added value of LEADER remains limited, its impact on local development, cooperation and governance is recognised as significant and difficult to replace with other support mechanisms.

Many of the actions that add value to LEADER are not simply quantifiable and countable. These are high-quality actions and therefore the challenge is to provide a direct and unambiguous answer to the question: how much added value does LEADER bring?

3. THE MAIN CONDITIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEADER APPROACH LAID DOWN BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The European Commission defines the main framework conditions for ensuring community-led local development in the Member States of the European Union.

Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council, adopted on 24 June 2021, lays down common rules for several European Union funds, including the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), which implements the LEADER approach.

LEADER is a mandatory part of the common agricultural policy (CAP) in the EU, with at least 5% of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) to be allocated to the LEADER approach.

Member States shall ensure that community-led local development:

- is targeted at sub-regional areas;
- is carried out under the leadership of local action groups composed of representatives of public and private local socio-economic interests and whose decision-making is not controlled by a single interest group;
- is implemented through strategies in line with a community-led local development strategy;
- support networking, accessibility, innovative features in the local context and, where appropriate, cooperation with other territorial actors.

Where support for the strategies is available from more than one Fund, the relevant managing authorities (the responsible Ministry) shall organise a joint call for the selection of those strategies and set up a joint committee for all the funds concerned to monitor the implementation of those strategies. The relevant managing authorities may choose one of the relevant funds to support all the costs of preparation, management and implementation of those strategies (capacity building and preparatory actions to support the future design and implementation of the strategy; management, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy and its implementation, including the promotion of exchanges between stakeholders).

Where the implementation of such a strategy involves support from more than one fund, the managing authorities concerned may choose one of the funds concerned as the lead fund.

Subject to the scope and eligibility rules of each fund involved in the implementation of the strategy, the rules of the master fund shall apply to that strategy. The institutions of other

funds shall be based on decisions and management verifications carried out by the competent authority of the main fund.

The central fund authority shall provide the institutions of the other funds with the information necessary to carry out supervision and payments in accordance with the rules laid down in the Fund-specific Regulations.

Local development strategies:

- Strategies should indicate the geographical area and the population to which they relate.
- Strategies should be developed with broad public participation.
- Strategies should be community-driven, based on an analysis of local needs and potential. The process of public involvement in the development of the strategy should be described.
- Innovative solutions must be included and long-term development promoted.
- An analysis of the development needs and potential of the territory should be carried out.
- The objectives of the strategy with measurable result indicators and planned actions should be defined.
- Management, monitoring and evaluation measures should be established to demonstrate the LAG's capacity to implement the strategy.
- A financial perspective should be drawn up, including the planned allocation from each Fund and the programmes concerned.

The relevant managing authorities (the responsible ministry) shall establish the criteria for the selection of those strategies, set up a committee to carry out that selection and approve the strategies selected by that committee.

The managing authorities concerned shall complete the first round of selection of strategies and shall ensure that the selected LAGs can fulfil their assigned tasks (in more detail in the next section "Local Action Groups") within 12 months of the date of the decision approving the programme or, in the case of strategies supported by more than one Fund, within 12 months of the decision to approve the last programme concerned.

The decision approving the strategy shall determine the allocation of each Fund and the programme concerned and shall lay down responsibilities relating to the management and control tasks of the programme or programmes.

Local action groups (LAGs):

- LAGs are independent partnerships between the public, private and non-governmental sectors.

- The LAGs are responsible for drawing up and implementing the local development strategy.
- The LAGs are inclusive and either choose one partner from the group as the lead partner in administrative and financial matters, or they merge into a legally constituted single entity.

LAGs shall carry out the following tasks:

- Develops and implements a local development strategy (task updates, monitors progress towards achieving the objectives of the strategy, evaluates the implementation of the strategy),
- advises potential project applicants on the relevance of their idea to the interests of the inhabitants of the local area and the developed strategy;
- A special project evaluation commission shall be established, in which the applications submitted for each project tender that best meet the objectives of the development strategy are evaluated;
- promotes the involvement (activation) of local people and businesses in development processes by organising trainings, seminars and discussions to promote cooperation and the development of new ideas.
- builds the capacity of local actors to develop and implement activities;
- develop a non-discriminatory and transparent selection procedure and criteria that avoid conflicts of interest and ensure that selection decisions are not controlled by any single interest group;
- prepare and publish calls for proposals;
- selects the operations and determines the amount of aid and submits proposals to the body responsible for the final verification of eligibility before approval.

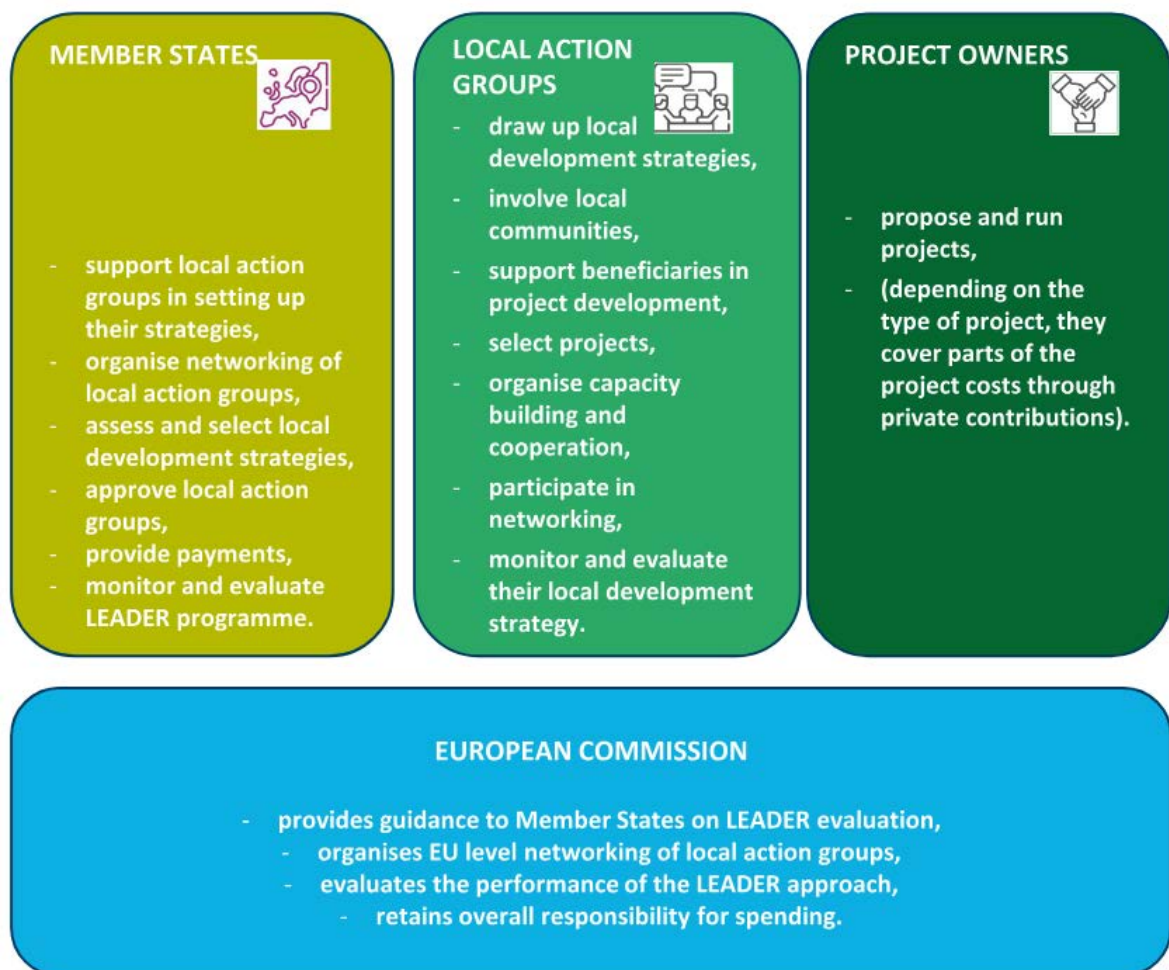
Fund support for community-led local development:

- capacity-building and preparatory actions to support the development and implementation of the strategy in the future;
- the implementation of the actions selected under the strategy, including cooperation activities and their preparation;
- management, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy and its implementation, including the promotion of exchanges between stakeholders.

These conditions form the basis for the implementation of the LEADER approach in the Member States, ensuring the active involvement of local communities and the development and implementation of strategies tailored to the development needs of the territories.

Responsibilities of the parties involved

Member States and, depending on their political structure, regional authorities prepare programming documents, such as partnership agreements, as well as operational and rural development programmes. These documents set out national or regional funding priorities. The European Commission examines and approves these documents. The Commission retains overall responsibility for expenditure, while Member States approve local action groups and local development strategies, process project applications and payment requests, and monitor and evaluate results. The following figure presents the main responsibilities of the participants in the LEADER approach.

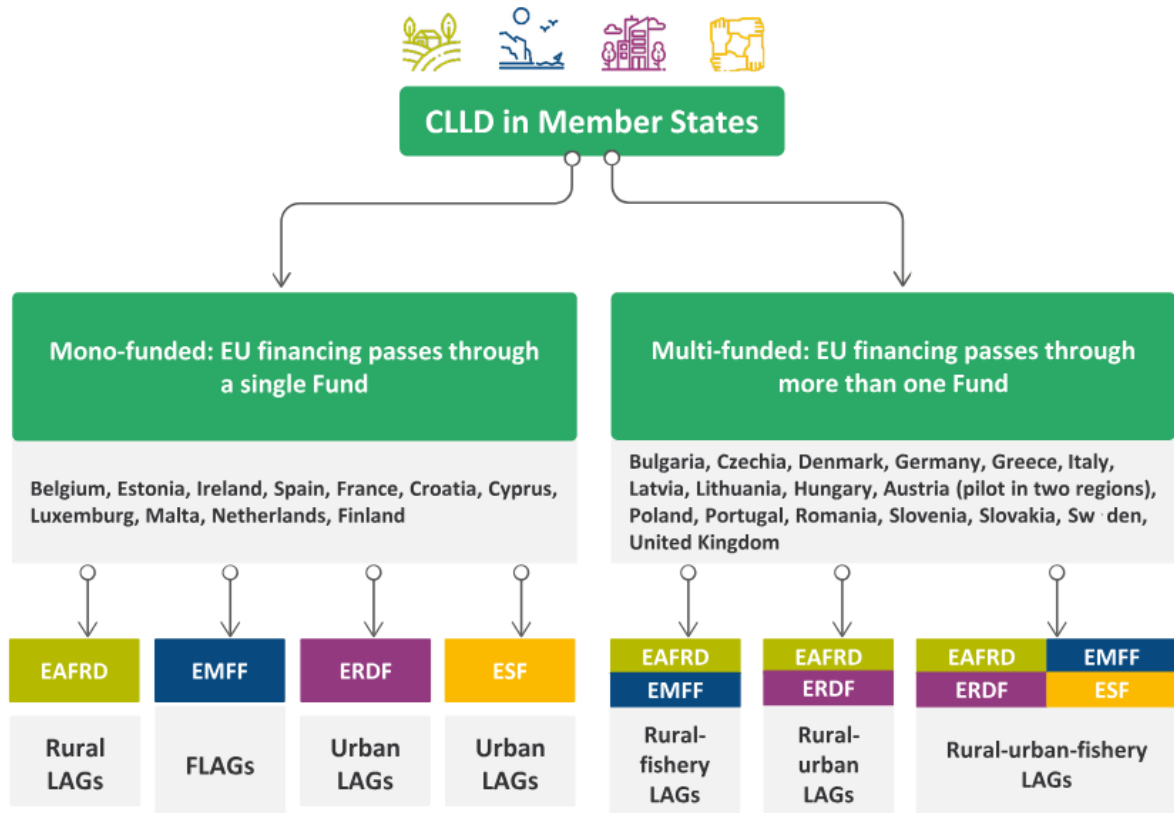


Key responsibilities of the LEADER approach actors

Member States could choose to support LAGs from a single EU fund ('one-fund approach') or several funds ('multi-fund approach'). They may also designate a single fund as a "core fund" to cover all the administrative costs of the LAGs. The central fund authority shall provide the

institutions of the other funds with the information necessary to carry out supervision and payments in accordance with the rules laid down in the Fund-specific Regulations.

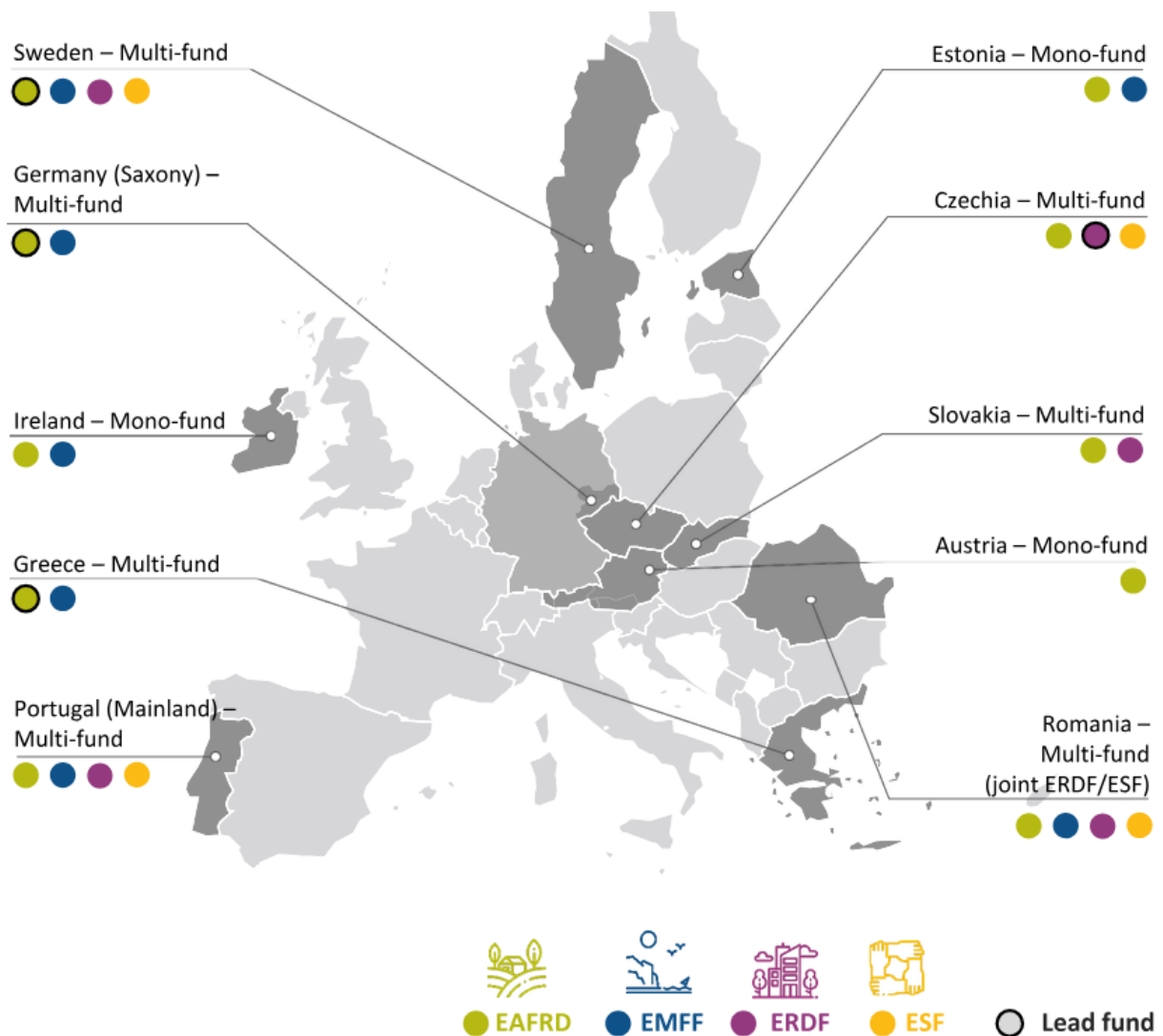
In 2014–2020, 17 out of 28 Member States used a multi-fund approach with different combinations of funds to better coordinate local development support and strengthen links between rural, urban and fisheries areas.



Funding approaches used by the Member States

Member States could choose to support LAGs from a single EU fund ('one-fund approach') or several funds ('multi-fund approach'). They may also designate a single fund as a "core fund" to cover all the administrative costs of the LAGs. The central fund authority shall provide the institutions of the other funds with the information necessary to carry out supervision and payments in accordance with the rules laid down in the Fund-specific Regulations. When implementing a multi-fund approach (or multi-fund approach), the basic requirements of the master fund are applied. This is often a challenge, as different funds have their own European Commission regulations, but the system should be made as harmonised and simple as possible, allowing that specific requirements may differ from one fund to another.

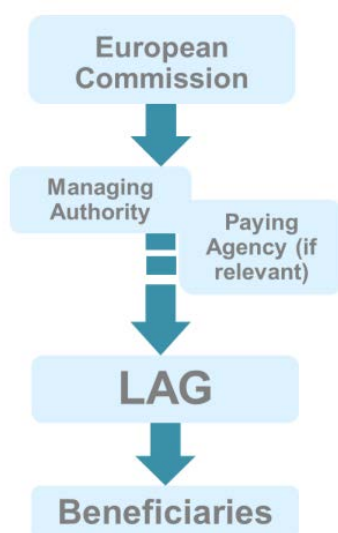
In 2014–2020, 17 out of 28 Member States used a multi-fund approach with different combinations of funds to better coordinate local development support and strengthen links between rural, urban and fisheries areas. However, in the 2023–2027 programme period, the use of the multi-fund approach has decreased. The European Court of Auditors' report indicates that several Member States (from 17 to 10 Member States), including Sweden, consider this approach to be difficult and costly to administer, especially given that most projects could only be financed by the EAFRD.



Selected Member States and regions, and the selected LAG's funding approach

CLLD delivery system

In the basic CLLD delivery system the flow is as follows: the European institutions establish common objectives and principles of each fund; the national or regional MA designs the basic rules for implementing the programme; the MA launches a call to select the LAGs; the LAG publishes a call for proposals and receives, assesses and selects operations which will be supported to meet the objectives of the local strategy; the beneficiaries implement the projects and receive the funding. Each of the ESI Funds has its own structure, culture and practice for managing the funds. The CPR sets out the basic framework, but many different systems are used in the Member States. MAs may be at national or regional level depending on the size of the country, the fund concerned and on other factors such as the level of decentralisation or federalism. The MA designs the delivery system and defines who does what.



CLLD delivery system

The way the delivery system is designed has a strong impact on the functioning of the LAG and the types of projects which are ultimately financed. If the delivery system is not adapted to the CLLD approach, then many of the benefits which the approach delivers may be eroded or lost. For example the benefits of the quick turnaround from the LAG's local decision-making, the application of local knowledge in project selection and the motivation and commitment arising from the sense of ownership and responsibility of the local partnership may be reduced if the MA or paying agency duplicates these decision-making functions. However, adequate measures should be in place to mitigate possible situations of conflict interest and to ensure the segregation of function between the actors involved in the local decision-making process. The most valuable work which LAGs do is in animating community initiatives. This is particularly so in the case of the more complex projects involving different partners – often those projects that are most innovative and have the greatest potential for change. It is important therefore to ensure

that the LAG does not have to focus primarily on administrative work, as this reduces its capacity to animate. The specificity of CLLD delivery means also that the financing mechanisms might have to be adapted (including national contribution, advance payments etc.), to enable the LAGs and their beneficiaries, often NGOs, SMEs or informal bodies, to implement their projects.

Improving access to finance at the local level

LAGs are often private bodies (in the form of associations, non-profit companies, or without any legal entity), charged with a responsibility to deliver a public service. The relevant mechanisms for public funding of CLLD should be adapted to take this into account. This should also take account of the specific characteristics of many of the local beneficiaries whose projects are supported by the LAG. Several options to facilitate access to funding for local actors are possible.

Co-financing

Making national public co-financing available up-front: It is advisable to ensure that in CLLD the national public co-financing is provided by the responsible ministry or regional authority at the same time as the EU grant. Such solutions contribute to the simplicity and transparency of the delivery system and put all the LAG partners on the same footing.

An important principle of CLLD is that the partnership should know in advance its total budget including the national public co-financing in order to animate and select projects of highest priority from the strategic point of view.

Many beneficiaries have limited finance and cash flow. They can therefore have difficulties waiting until the project is completed and accounted for to receive the grant. This can also be true for some LAGs in the case of running and animation costs. Such problems can be addressed by interim or advance payments which should be covered by guarantees if required.

Interim payments

Interim or staged payments. Larger projects can be broken into stages, with the possibility to request a certain part of payment at the completion and reporting of each stage. In this way the beneficiary does not have to wait for the payment until the whole project is finished and accounted for, which helps to reduce cash flow problems. This solution has been used in many Member States in the 2007–2013 period.

Pre-financing mechanisms

Pre-financing mechanisms such as advance payments. This is a way to enable LAGs and other beneficiaries to obtain funding as soon as the project has been approved in order to start implementation. In funds covered by the CPR each programme receives pre-financing from the Commission, followed by interim payments based on declarations of expenditure and completed

by a final payment. Member States may choose to use the flexibility that these prefinancing payments offer e.g. to make advance payments with national funds for running costs to LAGs delivering CLLD strategies. In particular, advances of up to 50% of the public support related to running costs and animation are explicitly envisaged in the EAFRD and in the EMFF regulations. The EAFRD Regulation also gives the possibility for such advance payment to beneficiaries of investment related support . To apply for advance payments, LAGs and beneficiaries may have to provide an adequate form of guarantee. Where advance payments are not available beneficiaries may seek bridging finance from financial institutions in order to cover the costs of their project before they can be reimbursed with EU funding; loans can also be needed for the beneficiary's own contribution to the project. It is therefore important for the LAG to establish good relationships with the financial sector in their area (for instance local banks or credit unions) in order to help facilitate access to loans and guarantees for CLLD projects.

How to coordinate with other funds?

Why coordinate between EU funds?

Coordination between funds is a means to an end not an end in itself. All levels need to be clear about what they are trying to achieve by coordination and adapt the methods they use accordingly. Better coordination can have the following advantages:

Firstly, a process of collective community stocktaking of the ways in which the existing mosaic of funds and initiatives are being used can help to ensure that local development strategies are better placed to respond to the new emerging challenges and focus on those things that the community really wants to, and can change at local level.

Secondly, it can ensure that different initiatives pull in the same direction and reinforce each other rather than competing for projects, duplicating or even contradicting each other. This kind of policy coherence is important for improving the overall results achieved by different local initiatives, as well as for strengthening the contribution that local development makes to regional and national programmes.

Finally, better coordination can help to rationalise the use of existing material and human resources. Buildings and administrative capacity can be shared, transport costs reduced and any duplication eliminated. This can lead to overall cost savings and/or resources can be redeployed to meet more important local priorities.

On the other hand, a poorly planned integration of funds can increase complexity and distract LAGs from their main goals in addressing local needs and opportunities. Therefore,

stakeholders should avoid setting up complicated coordination mechanisms for their own sake, unless there are clear advantages in terms of delivering results on the ground.

At what level should coordination between funds take place?

To work well, coordination between funds ultimately has to take place at all levels – European, national, regional and local. However, it is possible for one level to compensate for the lack of coordination at other levels. For example, local agencies often try to operate as a one-stopshop for beneficiaries by internalising the complexity of managing different national programmes and funding sources. However, unless coordination also improves up-stream, there is a risk that the local level will drown in administrative procedures. In fact, the conditions and opportunities for coordination between funds at local level are set at the EU, national and regional levels.

The Commission offers the opportunity for the same local development strategy to be funded by more than one fund (multi-funding) or one fund only (mono-funding). If Member States choose the multi-funding option for some or all local development strategies they also have the option of indicating a “lead fund” (usually the largest fund) in the framework of a selected strategy, which can cover all of the preparatory, running and animation costs of the local action group (LAG). This can simplify matters by avoiding the need to justify the allocation of running and animation costs according to the projects financed by each fund.

However, even if Member State chose mono-funding, they must still ensure coordination in various ways: “Support from the ESI Funds concerned to community-led local development shall be consistent and coordinated between the ESI Funds concerned. This shall be ensured inter alia through coordinated capacity-building, selection, approval and funding of community-led local development strategies and local action groups”.

The regulation does not say how this should be done. The detailed procedures that create the conditions for coordination at local level depend on the institutional context in each Member States and are set at national or regional level.

SUMMING UP, the [European Commission](#) sets out the key building blocks to ensure community-led local development in the Member States of the European Union. **LEADER is a mandatory part of the common agricultural policy (CAP) and Member States must direct at least 5% of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) to this approach.**

The process starts with the European Commission setting general objectives, followed by national or regional managing authorities, which set up implementation systems and select local action groups (LAGs). The LAG then launches calls for proposals for local projects, selects actions that align with their strategies and implements the beneficiaries.

Community-led development must be implemented under the leadership of local action groups (LAGs) and with the active participation of local communities. Strategies should be based on an analysis of local needs and potentials, with innovative solutions, and should be developed taking into account public opinion. The LAGs are responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring strategies, ensuring clear management and evaluation. Funds are allocated on the basis of selected programmes and strategies, with clear objectives and criteria. The CLLD system allows for both single- and multi-fund strategies, with a lead fund to simplify operations.

4. MAIN CONDITIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEADER APPROACH IN LATVIA

As mentioned in Chapter 3 "Key conditions for the implementation of the LEADER approach laid down by the European Commission", [the European Commission](#) defines the main building blocks to ensure community-led local development in the Member States of the European Union. The so-called Responsible Authority (in Latvia it is the Ministry of Agriculture) ensures other conditions for the qualitative implementation of the LEADER approach and the achievement of the objectives of the programme in the country.

The common agricultural policy (CAP) is just one of the policies that affects rural areas and seeks to support their development in addition to cohesion, educational, social and other policies at EU level. However, it is the CAP that is most directly linked to rural areas.

The main objective of the CAP remains food production, while promoting sustainable agricultural practices and management of natural resources, contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the Green Deal, as well as supporting the socio-economic development, entrepreneurship, development and implementation of rural areas, as provided for [in the approved Latvian CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 \(CAP SP\)](#).

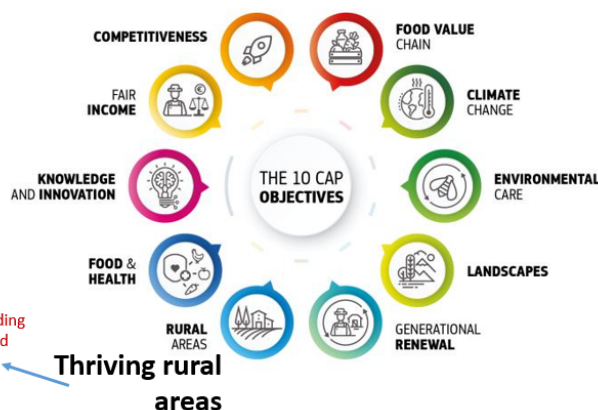
LEADER activities under the CAP will contribute to regional development and the reduction of socio-economic disparities by improving the business environment and creating the conditions for the creation of new jobs and services, so that the attractiveness of regional territories and their ability to participate more actively in the overall economic growth of the country will ensure the well-being of its citizens.



Basic objectives and priorities of the common agricultural policy (CAP)

- Promoting a smart, competitive resilient and diverse agricultural sector;
- Supporting environmental care and climate action;
- Strengthening the socio-economic environment in rural areas

Promoting employment, growth, gender equality, including women's participation in agriculture, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including promoting a circular bioeconomy and sustainable forestry

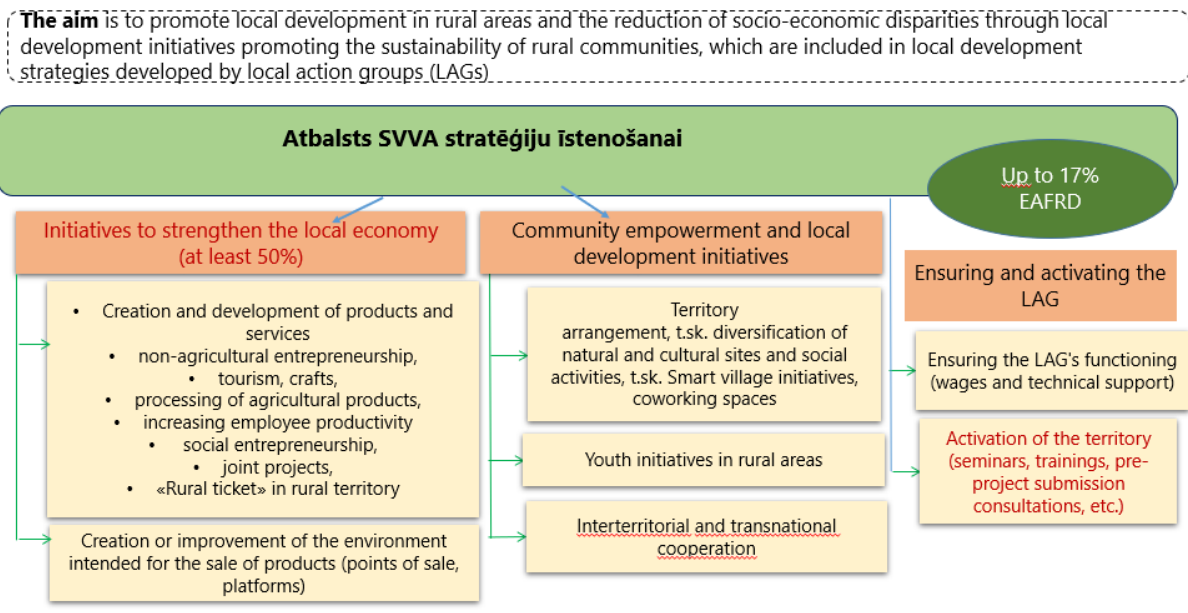


Support for local development initiatives promoting the sustainability of rural communities by improving the social situation in rural areas, creating favourable environments for living, entrepreneurship and rural development under the CAP SP is provided through the introduction of the LEADER approach. EUR 58.5 million is allocated for these activities. euro, which is 7% of the total funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

Under the LEADER approach, **the distribution of funding** is as follows:

- **85% of the funding comes from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD),**
- **15% is the State co-financing,** which is covered by the relevant Member State (in Latvia - from the state budget funds).

This breakdown of co-financing refers to measures implemented under the **Community-led Local Development Strategies (CLLD)** under the LEADER approach. This applies both to project implementation and to support the activities of LAGs (t.sk performance and animation).



Implementation of the LEADER measure under the CAP SP in the 2023–2027 programming period

Territory of operation – the entire territory of Latvia, except for state cities (Daugavpils, Jelgava, Jekabpils, Jurmala, Liepaja, Ogre, Rēzekne, Riga, Valmiera, Ventspils). The area of operation has from 10,000 to 125,000 inhabitants. The LAG's smallest territorial unit is a parish or town. The LAG's areas of activity did not overlap, they were one-piece (compact).

Institutions involved in the implementation of the LEADER approach in Latvia

Managing and competent authority (Ministry of Agriculture)

- Development, management, implementation of the CAP Strategic Plan (CAP SP);
- developing national laws and regulations to ensure the effective implementation of the CAP SP;
- monitoring and evaluation of the CAP SP;
- informing the public about the possibilities of support.

Website of the institution: www.zm.gov.lv

Paying agency (Rural Support Service)

- administration of measures (LEADER – decides on support for projects approved by the LAG);
- informing applicants;
- approval and control of payment claims;
- LAG monitoring and methodological support to the LAG.

Website of the institution: www.lad.gov.lv

Local Action Groups (LAGs)

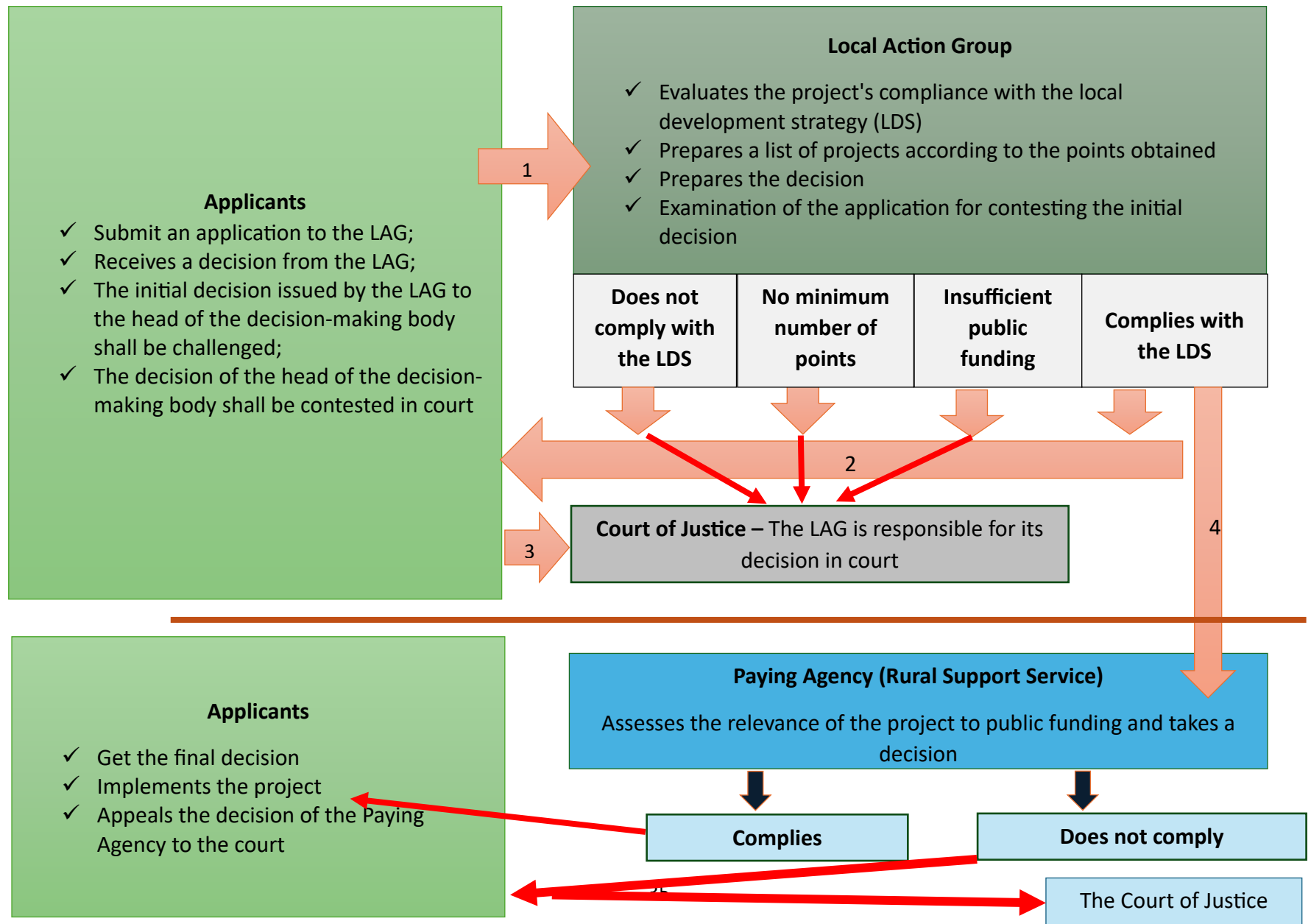
- development and implementation of a local development strategy (LDS);
- administration of the project selection procedure;
- cross-territorial and cross-border cooperation;
- monitoring and evaluation of the LDS;
- networking and animation activities.

National CAP Network

- collecting, analysing and disseminating information on activities and good practices;
- set up a platform, forums and events to facilitate the exchange of experience;
- networking at EU level with other CAP networks, t.sk. the EU CAP network;
- provide training for the LAG;
- to help the LAG find cooperation partners.

Website of the institution: www.laukutikls.lv

Procedure for administration



Local Action Groups (LAGs) across Latvia

Currently in the territory of Latvia, 33 local action groups (partnerships of local authorities, non-governmental organisations, entrepreneurs and active rural residents, representing the interests of inhabitants and taking care of territorial development issues at the local level) have prepared a CLLD strategy for their area of activity, which sets out objectives and action support for receiving support in the programming period 2023–2027. Six of all LAGs, with the support of the EMFF, implement the LEADER approach in coastal areas.

LEADER / SVVA vietējo rīcības grupu (VRG) teritorijas periodā no 2023. gada



33 LAGs across Latvia in the programming period 2023–2027

Local action group (LAG)	LAG operate territory	Main themes linked with LAG Strategy
Association "Abulas lauku partnerība"	Smiltenes district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job creation Support to rural businesses Smart villages Access to services and infrastructure Rural tourism Preserving the local heritage and culture

Association "Aizkraukles rajona partneriba"	Aizkraukles district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food supply chains • Renewable energy • Climate change and environmental sustainability • Smart villages • Rural tourism • Cooperation
Association "Aluksnes lauku partneriba"	Alūksnes district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to rural businesses • Rural tourism • Rural innovation (non-agricultural) • Ensuring local capacity • Cooperation
Association "Ziemeļlatgales partneriba"	Viļakas district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to rural businesses • Smart villages • Rural tourism
Association "Bauskas rajona lauku partneriba"	Bauskas district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food supply chains • Job creation • Support to rural business • Smart villages • Social inclusion • Ensuring local capacity
Association "Cesu rajona lauku partneriba"	Cēsu district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food supply chains • Climate change and environmental sustainability • Support to rural businesses • Smart villages • Access to services and infrastructure • Rural innovation (non-agricultural)
Association "Darisim pasi!"	Kuldīgas district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to rural businesses • Smart villages • Access to services and infrastructure • Rural tourism • Rural innovation (non-agricultural) • Preserving the local heritage and culture

Association "Partnerība "Kaimini""	Daugavpils district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge transfer • Support to rural businesses • Smart villages • Rural tourism • Cooperation • Preserving the local heritage and culture
Association "Dobeles rajona lauku partnerība"	Dobeles district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to rural businesses • Access to services and infrastructure • Rural tourism • Rural innovation (non-agricultural) • Rural-urban linkages • Preserving the local heritage and culture
Association "Lauku partnerība "Lielupe""	Jelgavas district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food supply chain • Support to rural businesses • Smart villages • Rural tourism • Preserving the local heritage and culture
Association "Jurkante"	Limbažu district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food supply chain • Job creation • Smart villages • Social inclusion • Rural tourism • Preserving the local heritage and culture
Association "Kandavas Partnerība"	Tukuma district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change and environmental sustainability • Support to rural businesses • Access to services and infrastructure • Rural tourism • Cooperation • Preserving the local heritage and culture

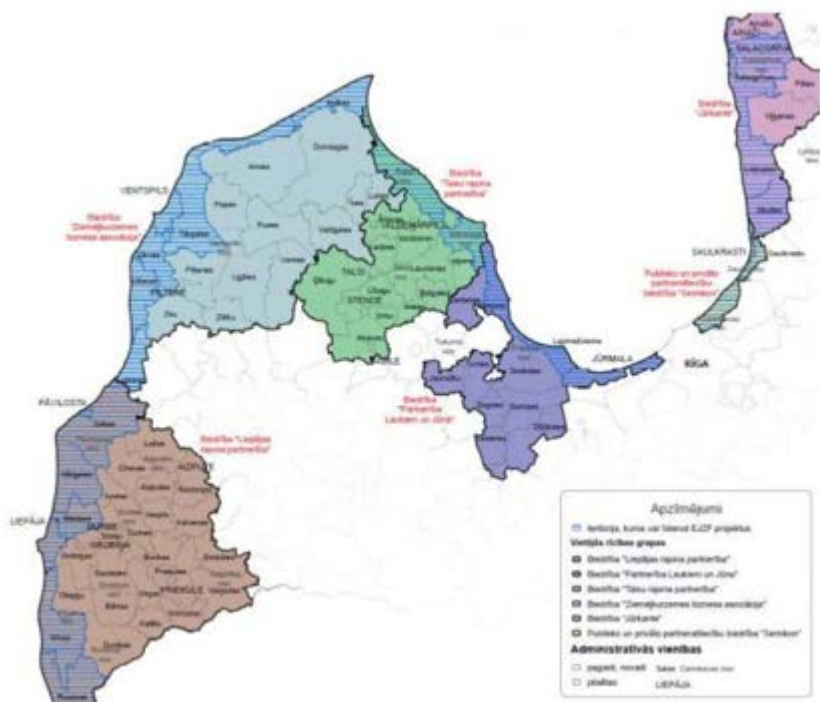
Association "Vidusdaugavas NVO centrs"	Salas district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to rural businesses • Smart villages • Access to services and infrastructure • Rural tourism • Rural innovation (non-agricultural) • Preserving the local heritage and culture
Association "Lauku partneriba ZIEMELGAUJA"	Smiltenes district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to rural businesses • Smart villages • Rural tourism • Rural innovation (non-agricultural) • Preserving the local heritage and culture
Association "Liepajas rajona partneriba"	Aizputes district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge transfer • Support to rural businesses • Rural tourism • Preserving the local heritage and culture
Association "Ludzas rajona partneriba"	Ludzas district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food supply chains • Job creation • Support to rural businesses • Smart villages • Rural innovation (non-agricultural) • Preserving the local heritage and culture
Foundation "Madonas novada fonds"	Madonas district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food supply chains • Support to rural businesses • Social inclusion • Rural tourism • Ensuring local capacity • Preserving the local heritage and culture
Association "No Salacas līdz Rujai"	Valkas district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food supply chains • Support to rural businesses • Access to services and infrastructure • Rural innovation (non-agricultural) • Ensuring local capacity

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserving the local heritage and culture
Association "Partnerība "Daugavkrasts""	Kekavas district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge transfer • Food supply chains • Support to rural businesses • Smart villages • Rural tourism • Ensuring local capacity
Association "Partnerība Laukiem un Jurai"	Tukuma district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to rural businesses • Smart villages • Access to services and infrastructure • Rural innovation (non-agricultural) • Cooperation • Preserving the local heritage and culture
Association "Pierīgas partnerība"	Mārupes district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge transfer • Climate change and environmental sustainability • Support to rural businesses • Smart villages • Rural innovation (non-agricultural) • Ensuring local capacity
Association "Preiļu – Līvanu novadu partnerība "KUPA""	Preiļu district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to rural businesses • Access to services and infrastructure • Rural tourism • Smart villages • Rural innovation (non-agricultural) • Preserving the local heritage and culture
Association "Juras Zeme"	Saulkrastu district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to rural businesses • Smart villages • Rural tourism • Ensuring local capacity • Cooperation • Preserving the local heritage and culture

PPP society "Zied zeme"	Ogres district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job creation • Smart villages • Cooperation
Association "Rezeknes novada partneriba"	Rēzeknes district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge transfer • Food supply chains • Job creation • Support to rural businesses • Rural innovation (non-agricultural) • Cooperation
Association "Lauku Attīstības Partnerība"	Siguldas district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food supply chains • Climate change and environmental sustainability • Preserving the local heritage and culture • Support to rural businesses • Rural tourism
Association "Ropazu Salaspils partnerība"	Ropažu district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change and environmental sustainability • Support to rural businesses • Smart villages • Access to services and infrastructure • Social inclusion • Cooperation
Association "Saldus rajona attīstības biedrība"	Saldus district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change and environmental sustainability • Support to rural businesses • Smart villages • Access to services and infrastructure • Rural innovation (non-agricultural) • Cooperation
Association „SATEKA”	Gulbenes district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change and environmental sustainability • Support to rural businesses • Smart villages • Access to services and infrastructure • Rural innovation (non-agricultural) • Cooperation

Association "Vidzemes lauku partnerība "Brasla""	Limbažu district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food supply chain • Support to rural businesses • Access to services and infrastructure • Rural innovation (non-agricultural) • Preserving the local heritage and culture
Association "Ziemeļkurzemes biznesa asociācija"	Talsu district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to rural businesses • Smart villages • Access to services and infrastructure • Rural tourism • Ensuring local capacity • Preserving the local heritage and culture
Association "Kraslavas rajona partnerība"	Krāslavas district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job creation • Support to rural businesses • Smart villages • Access to services and infrastructure • Rural tourism • Preserving the local heritage and culture
Association "Talsu partnerība"	Talsu district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge transfer • Renewable energy • Support to rural businesses • Rural tourism • Preserving the local heritage and culture

Detailed information about EU Local actions groups can be found on database – https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/networking/leader/lag-directory/search_en?f%5B0%5D=country%3A21



6 coastal fisheries LAGs (FLAGs)

There are 6 Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) operating in Latvia, which cover coastal areas and promote the development of communities important to the fisheries sector. These groups operate under the LEADER approach, which emphasises the cooperation of local residents, entrepreneurs and local authorities to develop and implement development strategies in their territories.

The main task of the LAG is to develop and implement community-led local development strategies that are in line with the objectives of the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF). These strategies include projects that contribute to the sustainable development of fisheries, such as improving fishing infrastructure, developing aquaculture, promoting coastal tourism and protecting the environment.

Selection criteria for LAGs

Nr.	Criterion	Sub-criterion	Number of points in the criterion
1.	Number of members in the LAG by status at the time of submission of the LAG submission		1 point per member per 1000 inhabitants in the LAG's area of activity ^{1, 2}
2.	Territorial coverage of the activities of the LAG (representation of members by registered address, registered office or location and places of activity of the unit of the legal entity (if applicable)) in order to promote the smooth development of the territory		0.1 points for each per cent of the territorial coverage of county parishes and county cities ³
3.	Diversity of representatives of the LAG's decision-making body	entrepreneurs	number of representatives, multiplied by 0.5 points
		non-governmental organizations	number of representatives, multiplied by 0.3 points
4.	Over the past two years, information activities have been organised for citizens in the LAG's area of activity (with the exception of publications on the announcement of the project acceptance round and seminars on project tenders and projects approved or implemented in tenders related to ensuring the	Information seminars, citizens' forums and working groups	Number of participants versus the percentage of population present in the LAG's area multiplied by the coefficient of the number of activities ^{4, 2}
		Information on the LAG's social media accounts	number of social media followers per 100 inhabitants in the LAG's area of activity at the time of submission, multiplied by 0.5 points ^{5, 2}

	implementation of the local development strategy 2014–2020, including during the transition period in 2021 and 2022)		(the maximum number of social media followers in the sub-criterion is up to 10 per cent of the total population in the LAG's area of activity)
		information in newspapers and regional television in the LAG's area	0.5 points for each time the information is inserted
		information in national newspapers and on national television	0.1 point for each time the information is inserted
5.	Over the past two years, the LAG has implemented other accompanying activities (e.g. project tenders, studies, training, implemented projects, landscaping) for which funding has been received from financial sources other than EAFRD and EMFF funding, with the exception of international cooperation projects implemented with EAFRD or EMFF funding (outreach activities are not applicable)	Number of events	1 point per measure (the maximum number of points in the sub-criterion is 5 points)
		Number of international cooperation projects	1 point for project management, 0.3 points for implementation as a project partner (the maximum number of points in the sub-criterion is 5 points)
6.	Number of municipalities in the LAG's area of activity		0.2 points for each local government - for a local action group in the territory of which there is more than one municipality

7.	Number of representatives of the fisheries sector represented in the decision-making body of the LAG		1 point for each representative
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Notes.

¹ The criterion is calculated using the following formula:

$A = B / C * 1000$, where

A - number of points;

B - number of members;

C - the number of inhabitants in the area of activity of the LAG.

² The calculation of the criterion shall include the population of the entire area of activity corresponding to the intervention of the Strategic Plan and the Action Programme measure (if applicable).

³ The criterion is calculated using the following formula:

$A = B * 100 / C * 0.1$, where

A - number of points;

B - the number of parishes and towns of the counties in which there is a representation of members;

C - the total number of county parishes and county towns located in the area of activity of the LAG.

⁴ The criterion is calculated using the following formula:

$A = B * 100 / C * D$ when

A - number of points;

B - number of participants;

C - number of inhabitants in the LAG's area of activity;

D – coefficient of the number of events: 1,D (if no more than nine events are organised), 2,D (if 10-19 events are organised), 3,D (if 20-29 events are organised), etc.

⁵ The criterion is calculated using the following formula:

$A = (B * 100) / C * 0.5$, where

A - number of points;

B - number of followers of social networks;

C - the number of inhabitants in the area of activity of the LAG.

Conditions for support for Local Action Groups

The local development strategy shall be prepared and implemented by an association or foundation (hereinafter - the local action group). The LAG shall meet the following requirements:

- it is registered in the register of associations and foundations;
- it has not been declared insolvent of a legal person, it is not in liquidation proceedings, its activities have not been suspended or terminated, legal protection proceedings have not been initiated or legal protection proceedings are not being implemented;
- according to the information of the database to be published by the State Revenue Service, it does not have tax debts exceeding EUR 1000 in total, except for tax debts, the term of payment of which has been extended if the obligations of the tax debt are fulfilled;
- it has not been repaid for the inadequately used public funding found by the Rural Support Service for the support received for ensuring operation, acquiring skills and activating the territory during the programming period from 2014 to 2020 and also during the transition period in 2021 and 2022;
- it distinguishes between activities which are not of an economic nature and related financial flows from economic activities;
- The administrative body (Council/Management Board) responsible for the implementation of the local development strategy (hereinafter - the decision-making body) has been established in accordance with Article 31(2)(b) of Regulation 2021/1060. The rights, obligations and responsibilities of the decision-making body are laid down in the statutes or other instruments adopted by the LAG;
- an administrative manager has been selected who is employed in conformity with the normal working time specified in the Labour Law and who has at least a first level professional higher education, as well as appropriate knowledge, skills and practical work experience for the performance of the tasks referred to in Annex 1 to this Regulation;
- it has a project evaluation committee;
- it has identified specific directions for the development of the local area based on local needs;
- within the territory of its activity, at least one citizen information event (e.g. seminar, conference, citizens' forum, working group) has been organised within one year before the submission of the local development strategy to the Paying Agency in each county and city under state (where the LAG is applying to implement the local development strategy) or the local action group has participated in such an event providing information on its activities (with the exception of seminars on project

tenders, to ensure the implementation of the local development strategy in the specific programming period).

Administrative Manager in the LAG

The Administrative Manager is a person selected through a public tender procedure responsible for coordinating the implementation of the LEADER approach in a given Local Action Group (LAG). This manager manages the administrative work related to the acceptance of project applications, ensuring the evaluation process and reporting to the responsible authorities. The administrative manager is responsible for the preparation and implementation of a community-led local development strategy.

An administrative manager is employed in compliance with the normal working time specified in the Labour Law, and who has at least a first level professional higher education, as well as appropriate knowledge, skills and practical work experience for the performance of the tasks listed below.

The duties of the administrative manager are listed below:

- To announce and organise rounds of an open call for project applications for the implementation of a community-led local development strategy (hereinafter - the local development strategy).
- To organize the work of the project evaluation committee.
- To submit to the Paying Agency in a timely manner documentation related to the open call for project applications.
- Ensure substantive monitoring of project implementation.
- To amend the action plan of the local development strategy, as well as to update and supplement the local development strategy.
- To assess the fulfilment of the objectives set out in the local development strategy and the indicators of the results to be achieved (including the results of action).
- According to the competence, to ensure cooperation with institutions and organizations related to the development of the rural territory and operating in the Republic of Latvia or internationally.
- To ensure the publicity of the LAG's activities and to promote its visibility in the area of implementation of the local development strategy, as well as internationally.
- Prepare and submit payment claims in a timely manner, as well as an annual evaluation of the LAG's activities.
- Monitor and update the implementation of the concluded contracts for the success of the LAG.

- Provide potential project applicants with regular training, advice and seminars on supporting initiatives under the local development strategy.
- To supplement knowledge and improve professional skills and abilities necessary for successful performance of official duties.
- To follow amendments to the laws and regulations governing the operation of measures and, according to the competence, to participate in their preparation.

Structure of the community-led local development strategy

Summary (up to 2000 characters)

Coherence with the programmes of local governments located in the area of activity of the local action group and linking with other local development planning documents, if applicable (up to 3000 characters, reference to the corresponding strategic objective, action and results shall be indicated)

1. Assessment of the current situation (up to 19,000 characters):

1.1. the territory of activity:

1.1.1. general geographical survey;

1.1.2. socio-economic survey;

1.1.3. justification of the area of activity of the LAG;

1.2. ensuring the principle of partnership;

1.3. assessment of the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the territory;

1.4. identification and potential analysis of the development needs of the territory;

1.5. assessment of the needs of interterritorial and interstate cooperation.

2. Strategic part (up to 6600 characters):

2.1. vision and strategic objectives (including objectives of interterritorial and transnational cooperation);

2.2. Results to be achieved

Nr.	Goal	Result indicator	Base value (year)	Year 2025	Year 2027
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2.3. identification of innovative solutions.

3. Action plan

3.1. action plan for 2023–2027 in the intervention "Implementation of activities in accordance with the local development strategy, including cooperation activities and preparation thereof" of the Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan for 2023–2027 (hereinafter – the Strategic Plan intervention)

Nr.	Purpose/ action	Strategic Plan intervention activity	Maximum amount of eligible costs per project (<i>euro</i>)	Maximum aid intensity (%)	Implementation rounds (call principle)	Output indicators

3.1.1. a description of the criteria for determining the maximum aid intensity;

3.3. the need for other external financing and the assessment of attraction (up to 2000 characters).

4. Implementation and evaluation of a community-led local development strategy (up to 11 000 characters) does not include project evaluation criteria:

4.1. a description of the formation of information networks of the local action group and ensuring of co-operation with different organisations located in the territory of operation thereof;

4.2. ensuring complementarity with the specific support objectives of the European Union Cohesion Policy Programme for 2021-2027;

4.3. principles and procedures for determining project evaluation criteria, including prevention of conflict of interest;

4.4. the procedure for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of a community-led local development strategy;

4.5. organisation of the implementation of a community-led local development strategy.

5. Funding allocation plan

Nr.	Goal	In the intervention of the strategic plan		Action programmes in the action	
		Amount of aid (% of total support under the Strategic Plan intervention)	Amount of aid (euro)*	amount of aid (% of total aid under the Action Programme measure)	Amount of aid (euro)*
Together					
including business development					

Note. * To be completed upon receipt of the decision of the Paying Authority on the approval of the community-led local development strategy.

Selection criteria for a local development strategy

The local development strategy shall meet the following **selection criteria**:

- it is implemented in the area of the LAG's activities;
- its development involves citizens and representatives of different sectors in the area of activity of the LAG, in particular representatives of the fisheries sector, where the LAG is eligible for support under an Action Programme measure for the implementation of local development strategies;
- its vision and objectives are set on the basis of an analysis of the needs and potential of the local area;
- its action is determined in accordance with the objectives set;
- its objectives and each action define concrete, measurable and achievable results;

- it is coherent with the development programmes of local authorities in the LAG's area of activity;
- it aims to ensure equal opportunities, for example for people with disabilities, the elderly and people with young children, and to involve young people in the implementation of the local development strategy;
- it envisages innovative solutions, such as a new approach, product or service, in the area of implementation of the local development strategy;
- it promotes employment and the possibility of increasing income;
- It includes management, monitoring and evaluation measures demonstrating the capacity of the LAG to implement the local development strategy and establishes a transparent and non-discriminatory project selection and decision-making procedure, including the prevention of conflicts of interest.

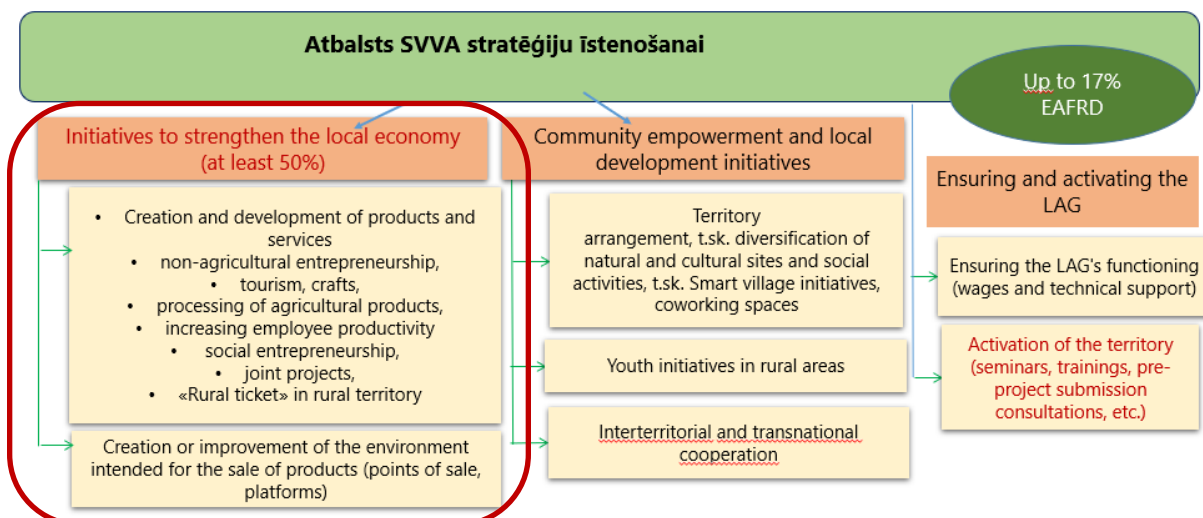
Implementation of the LEADER measure

The following activities are implemented in the LEADER measure:

- **"INITIATIVES TO STRENGTHEN THE LOCAL ECONOMY"** with the aim of stimulating the development and competitiveness of entrepreneurship, the creation of products and services, the creation of new jobs, the introduction of innovative technologies and practices, including digital solutions, the promotion of the productive and sustainable use of local resources, as well as the upskilling of workers and the integration of persons at risk of social exclusion into the labour market.
 - creation of products and services, development of existing products and services, their realization on the market, creation of an image of recognition, creation of quality working conditions and increase of employee productivity;
 - creation or improvement of an environment intended for the sale of products, as well as the introduction of new ways of sale and the formation of an image of their recognition.
- **"COMMUNITY-STRENGTHENING AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES"** with the aim of promoting public involvement in initiatives to strengthen local natural, physical, social and human capital and to the strategic and sustainable use and development of cultural capital, thereby increasing the security capacity of the rural population, as well as the potential and attractiveness of the site, which can become a prerequisite for new integrated tourism, cultural, health and other related services and products Quotation.

Activity "Initiatives to strengthen the local economy" (business projects)

The aim is to promote local development in rural areas and the reduction of socio-economic disparities through local development initiatives promoting the sustainability of rural communities, which are included in local development strategies developed by local action groups (LAGs).



Implementation of the LEADER measure in the programming period 2023–2027

Activities "Initiatives to strengthen the local economy" with the aim of stimulating business development and competitiveness, the creation of products and services, the creation of new jobs, the introduction of innovative technologies and practices, including digital solutions, the promotion of the productive and sustainable use of local resources, as well as the upskilling of workers and the integration of those at risk of social exclusion into the labour market.

Support is available for the following actions:

- the creation of products and services, the development of existing products and services, their realization on the market, the formation of an image of recognition, the creation of quality working conditions and the increase of employee productivity;
- for the creation or improvement of the environment intended for the sale of products, as well as for the introduction of new ways of sale and the formation of their recognizable image.

Aid applicants:

- entrepreneurs who plan, start or carry out an economic activity and whose turnover does not exceed EUR 150 000 in the last closed year prior to the submission of the project.
- local government, agricultural services cooperative society or forestry services cooperative society (implementing a joint project in which the planned investment is used jointly).

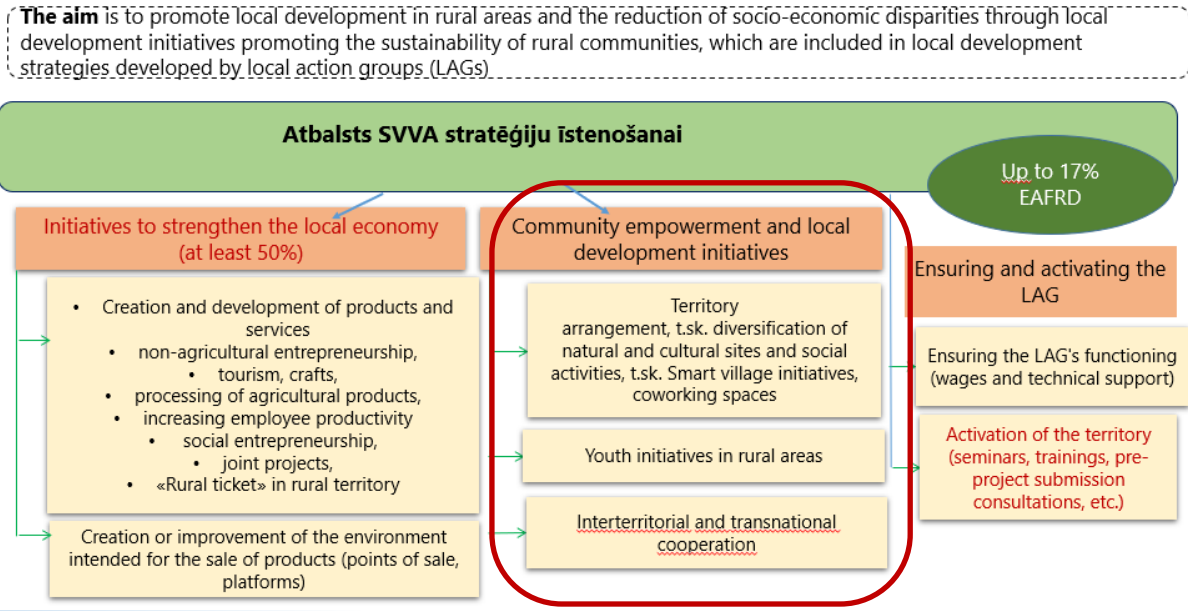
With the support of LEADER, **joint projects** can be implemented where entrepreneurs or municipalities work together to share investments, set up outlets or develop digital solutions.

The LAG may, in the local development strategy or by announcing a project adoption round, limit the areas and activities to be supported, the beneficiaries, the eligible and ineligible costs.

Aid may be granted if:

- the project **complies with** the local development strategy – the objectives and priorities set;
- the implementation of the project **contributes** to the area implementing the local development strategy, including the rural area;
- the project is implemented in the area of implementation of the **local development strategy**;
- the aid applicant meets the definition of **micro, small and medium-sized enterprises**;
- the aid applicant does not meet any of the **characteristics of an economic operator in difficulty**;
- The financial plan attached to the project confirms **the economic viability of the economic activity** and the ability to implement the project and achieve the project objective.

Activity "Community strengthening and local development initiatives" (public benefit initiatives)



Implementation of the LEADER measure in the programming period 2023–2027

The objective of the activity "Community strengthening and local development initiatives" is to promote public involvement in initiatives to strengthen local natural, physical, social and human capital and to the strategic and sustainable use and development of cultural capital, thereby increasing the security capacity of the rural population, as well as the potential and attractiveness of the site, which can become a prerequisite for new integrated tourism, cultural, health and other related services and products Quotation.

Support under the action "Initiatives to strengthen communities and promote local development" shall, in line with the local development strategy, be granted for the arrangement of local areas (including natural and cultural sites) in order to improve the accessibility, quality and accessibility of services and for the diversification of social activities (including smart villages, training and interest clubs, culture, environmental protection, sport and other leisure activities).

Aid applicants:

- Municipality
- association or foundation,
- religious organization,

- natural person. A natural person implements a public benefit project not related to his or her economic activity (if any),
- a legal or natural person carrying out an economic activity. In line with the local development strategy, funding shall be allocated to the clean-up of the local area (including natural and cultural sites) to improve the accessibility, quality and accessibility of services, and to the diversification of social activities (including smart villages, training and interest clubs, culture, environmental protection, sport and other leisure activities).

An association or foundation in co-operation with a local government may also implement a joint project in the activity "Initiatives Strengthening Communities and Promoting the Development of the Site" if a public benefit project is implemented in the infrastructure owned or possessed by the local government.

Aid may be granted if:

- the project **complies with** the local development strategy – the objectives and priorities set;
- the implementation of the project **contributes** to the area implementing the local development strategy, including the rural area;
- the project is implemented in the area of implementation of the **local development strategy**;
- the aid applicant meets the definition of **micro, small and medium-sized enterprises**;
- the aid applicant does not meet any of the **characteristics of an economic operator in difficulty**.

Evaluation of LEADER projects

The procedures for evaluating LEADER projects in Latvia are laid down in laws and regulations and in the community-led local development strategy (CLLD) developed by each local action group (LAG). It ensures that projects are evaluated fairly, transparently and in line with local development priorities.

Project evaluation committee

The LAG's decision-making body approves the composition of the project evaluation committee. The project evaluation committee may include one representative of another LAG, but does not include the administrative manager of the LAG. A representative of the decision-making body and a member of the evaluation committee shall not participate in the evaluation of projects and decision-making in the action (activity) of the local development strategy and in

the round of project adoption in which he or herself or persons related to him or her have submitted a project application and there is a conflict of interest.

The main stages of the evaluation procedure for LEADER projects:

1. Submission of projects:

- The LAG announces a project submission round, specifying the objectives, eligible actions, available funding and deadlines.
- Project applicants (natural or legal persons) prepare an application and submit it in accordance with the specified requirements.

2. Administrative check:

- The LAG checks that the application is complete, meets the formal criteria (submitted on time, correctly completed, etc.).
- In case of shortcomings, an opportunity is given to eliminate them.

3. Conformity assessment:

- The LAG checks that the project is in line with the objectives and specific actions set out in the CLLD strategy.

4. Qualitative evaluation of projects according to the points system (for more information, for more information, see this [link](#):

- The project selection committee approved by the LAG evaluates projects according to predefined qualitative criteria, such as:
 - Compliance of the project with local development objectives.
 - Sustainability and innovation.
 - Impact on employment and society.
 - Level of partnership and cooperation.
 - Environmental and social impact, etc.
- Each criterion is assigned a certain number of points.

5. Project ranking:

- Projects are ranked according to the points obtained.
- Funding is awarded to those who score the most points until the budget available for a given round is exhausted.

6. Validation and publication of results:

- The LAG's management board approves the evaluation results.

- The results are sent to the Rural Support Service and published on the LAG's website or in other publicly available forms.

7. Project submission to **LAD**:

- After approval by the LAG, the project is formally submitted to the Rural Support Service, which carries out a final inspection and decides on the allocation of funding.

Example: Project evaluation procedure in the LAG – association "SATEKA"

As an example, we attach the by-laws of the project evaluation and project monitoring commission submitted within the framework of the strategy of the association "SATEKA" (for more information - [link](#)), which **determines** the procedures for evaluating the projects **of the particular association**.

The project evaluation commission shall, within 30 calendar days after the end of the deadline for the submission of project applications or, if the relevant round lasts more than 30 calendar days, within two weeks after the end of each month of the relevant round, evaluate the conformity of the project with the action included in the action plan of the local development strategy in accordance with the following procedures and:

- suggests that the Association should not further evaluate the project that does not comply with the action specified in the action plan of the local development strategy and take a decision to reject the project and notify it to the Aid Applicant;
- proposes that the Association award points to a project that complies with the action specified in the action plan of the local development strategy in accordance with the project evaluation criteria specified in the local development strategy. For projects that do not obtain the minimum number of points according to the evaluation criteria determining the conformity of the project with the local development strategy, a reasoned negative opinion shall be given;
- For each action set out in the action plan of the local development strategy, a list of projects shall be drawn up separately, ranking the projects according to the number of points obtained. The list of projects shall indicate the public financing announced for each action in euro and the public financing transferred from other actions in euro (if applicable), the aid applicant, the name of the project, the place of project implementation (the smallest territorial unit), the public financing of the project application, the number of points allocated to the project application and the relevant positive or negative decision. Where several projects have obtained the same number

of points, preference shall be given to the project that has received more points than the specific criteria set out in the local development strategy;

- proposes that the Association take a decision on the conformity of the project with the local development strategy, if it has received at least the minimum number of points and there is sufficient public funding for its implementation in the appropriate round, and to notify it to the applicant for support. The minimum number of points shall be set proportionately to the maximum number of points that a project may obtain according to the evaluation criteria.

Next, project applications are evaluated by specialists of the Paying Agency (or Rural Support Service) in order of order.

Organisation for the representation of the interests of LAGs

The association "Latvian Rural Forum" was founded in December 2004, but registered in the Register of Enterprises in April 2005. Since its foundation, the aim of the association "Latvian Rural Forum" has been unchanged:

- to promote sustainable development of rural (local) territories of Latvia,
- to strengthen the formation of civil society in the rural areas of Latvia by promoting the development and cooperation of local initiative groups,
- to represent the interests of the rural population of Latvia in institutions of national and international level,
- to represent the interests of the local action groups admitted to the association in institutions of regional, national and international level,
- expanding the offer of lifelong learning in rural areas
- to promote research processes for the sustainable development of territories.

Around 2004 and already a couple of years before that, support programmes were operating in Latvia, which, inspired by the implementation of the LEADER approach in the European Union, carried out various similar measures in different regions of Latvia. For example, within the framework of the Baltic Rural Partnership Programme, partnerships were established in 3 districts of Latgale (Balvi, Daugavpils and Rzekne), which developed and implemented local strategies focusing on reducing poverty and social exclusion in rural areas. As a natural continuation of this and other programmes, there was a need to mobilise for actions at the national level – to look for solutions – as the voice of the Latvian countryside, rural communities could cooperate in different regions and together represent the rural voice in the national and international arena.

In 2004, active rural residents (non-governmental organizations, established local partnerships) and rural development enthusiasts/specialists (municipalities, Latvian Rural Advisory and Education Centre, national farmers' and women's associations) gathered in Sunny for a joint event. At this forum, a decision and commitment were made that a national movement should be formed, and a working group was set up, which was entrusted with the task of bringing the idea to an operational solution – to draw up statutes, invite the founders to a meeting, discuss the goals of the organization, the governing structure, etc.

In the following years, the association "Latvian Rural Forum" developed, becoming a local action group and a rural community, t.sk. a smart village, a connecting organisation, working on three strategic priorities: rural development, civil society and the implementation of the LEADER/CLLD approach.

5. PRACTICAL STEPS FOR STARTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LEADER AS A METHOD IN UKRAINE

These recommendations are mainly based on the European LEADER experience, adapted to Ukraine's current needs and conditions, in order to implement **LEADER as a method in Ukraine, promoting the development of community-led local rural areas**.

The seven main features of the LEADER approach explain what the LEADER approach is. Putting these principles into practice means that real people are involved in the development of local strategies and activities. This section describes some of the key steps in the LEADER implementation process in areas where this approach is being used for the first time. It does not describe every possible situation, as LEADER actions are too different.

The involvement of local actors in areas where LEADER has not yet been used usually starts when it becomes clear that a Member State or region will implement LEADER in the future (e.g. in the context of EU accession) and an open call for proposals for LEADER clusters is launched in good time.

The time and resources required to launch a CLLD strategy and partnership depend very much on the local context and the experience and capacity of local actors and organisations. But even in experienced communities, the entire cycle usually takes between six months to a year to do properly. The process is complex, but this is mainly because local communities themselves are very different and complex rather than because the approach is more complicated than others. The preparatory phase can uncover many hidden ideas, resources and opportunities and is critical for future success.

To start implementing LEADER as a programme and approach in Ukraine, we offer two roadmaps with practical steps:

- 1) Roadmap for the implementation of LEADER/CLLD as a programme (national level);**
- 2) Practical steps for the implementation of community-led local development in local areas (local level) – key issues to be addressed when launching LEADER as an approach in the local area.**

Roadmap for the implementation of the LEADER/CLLD programme (national level)

In order to start the implementation of the LEADER programme in Ukraine, it is necessary to carry out a number of practical actions based on the European experience, especially the example of Latvia.

STEP 1: Preparation and decision-making at the national level

- **Political will and regulatory framework:** A political commitment is needed to support CLLD principles and to develop appropriate legislation (e.g. as provided for in EU Regulation 2021/1060). The development of a regulatory framework in accordance with the European Commission's settings for the implementation of LEADER/CLLD as a support tool in the country is the task of the responsible officials of state ministries.
- **Identification of responsible authorities:** Identify the national managing authority (ministry) and the paying agency that will be responsible for implementing the LEADER programme.
- **Integration of LEADER into strategic documents:** LEADER should be included in the national and/or regional rural development strategy and financing documents.

STEP 2: Support the establishment of local action groups (LAGs)

The managing authority is responsible for selecting the LAG, ensuring a non-discriminatory and transparent selection procedure.

- **Identifying and motivating local initiatives:** Organise information events to present the LEADER approach in potential LAG areas.
- **Advisory and methodological support:** Ensure the presence of local advisers or regional support centres to help set up and develop the LAG.
- **Legal registration of LAGs:** They are usually set up as associations or non-profit organisations where the public, private and NGO sectors are represented.

STEP 3: Strengthening training and capacity building

- **Training programs:** Organize training on strategy development, project management, financial management, cooperation.
- **Capacity building of the LAG:** Provide support for the establishment, management and organisation of decision-making processes in the LAG.

STEP 4: Development of Local Development Strategies (LDS)

- **Community involvement:** Strategies should be developed with broad public participation – through discussions, surveys, working groups.

- **Defining the territory:** Choose small, homogeneous areas with social cohesion and development potential.
- **An integrated and multidisciplinary approach:** The strategy should cover several sectors (business, services, environmental issues, etc.).

STEP 5: Financing and administrative framework

- **Access to funding:** Ensure state (or foreign donor funding) co-financing – initially also without EU funds.
- **Simplified administration:** Implementation arrangements need to be adapted to LEADER's needs: administration as simple as possible, advance payments, transparent decisions.

STEP 6: Cooperation and networking

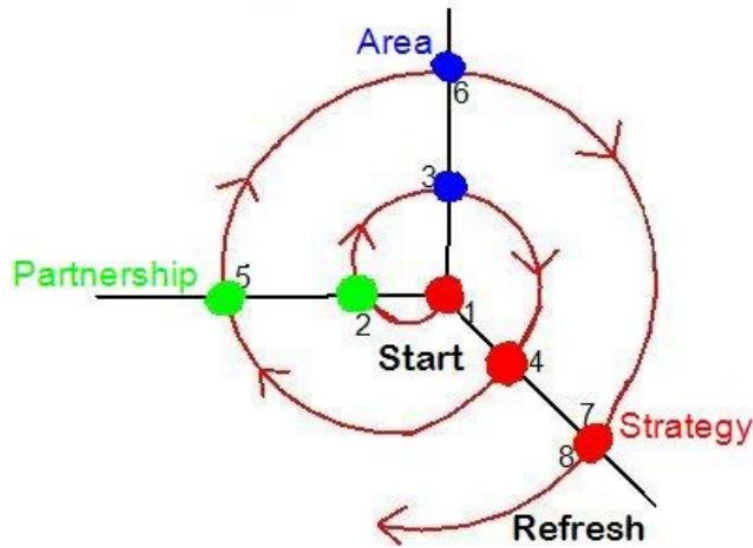
- **Platform for cooperation between LAGs:** To create a platform for cooperation and exchange of experience between LAGs.
- **International cooperation:** To promote cooperation with EU countries to learn good practices.

STEP 7: Monitoring and evaluation

- **Monitoring results:** Establish indicators and an evaluation system for the effectiveness of the implementation of the LEADER approach.
- **Flexibility for improvement:** Adapt strategies and administrative mechanisms based on learning and evaluation.

Practical steps for the implementation of community-led local development in local areas (local level)

Launching a process of CLLD can be broken down into a series of iterative steps or cycles for designing and shaping three basic components – the strategy, the partnership and the area. These are sometimes referred to as the “trinity” of CLLD and the way in which they are looked at and interact forms the basis of the bottom up “paradigm shift” that is the foundation of CLLD. These basic steps can be portrayed as a spiral, as shown in picture below – Spiral diagram of the area partnership and strategy trinity of CLLD over time. These steps can of course be broken down and grouped in different ways to suit different situations.



Spiral diagram of the area partnership and strategy trinity of CLLD over time

STEP 1: Initial initiative and identification of the area – selection of potential pilot areas.
Identify a rural area with a common identity, challenges and opportunities (Territory):

Determine the boundaries of your territory. Choose a one-piece (compact) area of operation. The territorial approach to the implementation of the policy as a target territory takes a small, homogeneous, socially cohesive area, which is often characterised by common traditions, local identity, a sense of belonging or common needs and expectations. The area should be large enough to provide resources and capacity, but not too large so as not to lose the involvement of local communities. For example, in Latvia, the LAG has from 10,000 to 125,000 inhabitants. The LAG's smallest territorial unit is a parish or town. The LAG's areas of activity did not overlap, they were one-piece (compact).

It is important to obtain the approval of the local municipality confirming that the specific Local Action Group (LAG) will implement the LEADER approach in the designated territories, as no other LAG will be eligible to apply for these territories once the approval is granted.

Here, too, community-led local development differs from the traditional bottom-up approach in the sense that the target areas do not have to have pre-defined administrative boundaries. National or regional authorities must, however, indicate what types of sites will or will not be eligible for this strategy and provide clear criteria for their selection. Within these broad borders, local actors can decide on the most appropriate borders to achieve their objectives. This means, firstly, ensuring that the area is large enough and has sufficient 'critical mass' to achieve its objectives and, secondly, that it is not excessively large to prevent the risk of the local community losing control. Finally, it must be 'coherent' in terms of physical, social

and/or economic and strategic objectives. For example, however, the physical boundaries created by coastlines, bodies of water or mountain ranges do not necessarily coincide with the locations or areas of activity of fisheries or agricultural clusters based on access to work or the use of basic services. Historical boundaries between municipalities in densely populated urban areas or on the outskirts of rural areas can also be an obstacle to effective operation. Many territories are affected by problems that go beyond local, regional or national administrative boundaries. Therefore, different local projects are often carried out in slightly different areas. Local actors can take these factors into account and reach a real compromise on the boundaries of the area of operation, thus ensuring the best chance of achieving the objectives of their strategy.

During the process of preparing the local development strategy and building partnerships, it will become clear that some problems can be better addressed by including other parts of the territory. For example, in a rural area, a local market city may have to be taken into account, or an underdeveloped urban area may need to consider links with areas that can offer local jobs and services. It may happen that a potential useful partner in the partnership may be located directly outside the initially designated boundaries. It is also possible that synergies between local initiatives financed by different EU funds can be improved by harmonising the respective borders. Finally, national or regional criteria may lead to adjustments to the definition of the area in the selection of community-led local development areas. For all these reasons, the specific boundaries of an activity must be seen as flowing and adaptable to changing circumstances. In fact, community-led local development offers local partnerships a range of alternative solutions to solve problems at different scales. For example, neighbouring local partnerships may each individually focus on actions financed by a particular fund and then use activities for cooperation or jointly engage in an action financed by another fund to best solve problems at different cross-border levels. Community-led local development offers flexibility to ensure that borders meet local development needs rather than being tied to a specific period of time. In cases where the expansion of the territory is considered, it should be taken into account that in all cases the expansion of the territory must be carried out with caution. Pressure will lead to a tendency to expand the territory, but this must not be done so as not to lose the sense of local identity and the participation of the local community.

STEP 2: Build trust and build partnerships with citizens who can help make a difference and participate in the development of the local area (Partnership)

This stage usually runs in parallel with deciding what the local community in the local area wants, develops, improves or changes. It requires direct communication with participants and enough time to identify the main tasks, hidden problems and historical discontent that lies deep in most local communities. The different stakeholders can be selected according to their

characteristics, such as level of interest, ability to influence results, etc. Individual and group discussions can help to identify common long-term goals, as well as short-term measures that can help achieve rapid success and build support. They can also help to find out who is better at what and what is the level of commitment to building a formal partnership. Before establishing a formal partnership, it is useful to build trust and gain experience of working together through an informal working group that can oversee the next steps.

An important step is to organise meetings with local residents in the local area to bring together key stakeholders, foster ideas and allow local actors to discuss the needs of the area. There are many ways to bring together local actors – lectures and workshops, public consultations, media and telecommunications, and the most common meeting place for local actors is fairs and exhibitions, as such events bring together participants to discuss all issues of interest and learn about different points of view and projects in the area.

Inform the public about LEADER as a method of promoting local development and the activities undertaken. It is important to mobilize and involve local activists, local leaders!

Encourage the emergence of ideas

LEADER can play an important role in promoting new innovative approaches to the development of rural areas. Such innovation is encouraged by giving the LAG a great deal of room for manoeuvre and flexibility in deciding on the actions they wish to support.

Innovation must be understood in a broad sense. An innovation can be a new product, a new process, a new organization or a new market. This common definition of innovation applies to both rural and urban areas. However, due to the low population density and relatively low levels of human and physical resources in rural areas, rural areas have weaker links with R&D centres and may find it more difficult to introduce cardinal innovations, although this is, of course, possible.

Innovation in rural areas may include the uptake and adaptation of innovation from elsewhere, the modernisation of traditional forms of know-how or the emergence of new solutions to long-standing problems that have not been sufficiently well and sustainably addressed by other policy measures. It may offer new solutions to problems specific to rural areas.

The LEADER approach with its seven features and the introduction of this approach can also be an innovation in policy-making that can lead to innovative actions with the initially adopted method of policy implementation.

Important! Together with the local population, generate creative ideas based on illustrative examples (including good practices from other countries). Real-world examples lead to a clearer understanding.

STEP 3: Agree on the structure of the partnership and find out who is doing what (Partnership)

Local authorities have different levels of ability, different common work and/or disagreement histories, and very different institutional work cultures. Experience has shown that, for this reason, it is essential to establish a partnership adapted to the real conditions of the local area. However, there are two wide models. In the first model, a completely new legal entity is being formed, uniting local cooperation partners. It can be organized in different forms depending on local conditions (for the most part, these are non-profit organizations). Whatever legal form is chosen, it must be broadly representative of the relevant stakeholders in local strategies, open, transparent and accountable to both the local population and its founders. The specific balance of the partners involved and their decision-making powers depend on local circumstances, but, as mentioned above, the main feature of community-led local development is that partnerships must not be dominated by a single group of public or private interests.

The exchange of views and territorial analysis of local actors helps to identify the groups that should be included in the public-private partnership and that should lead implementation activities. In this way, a local action group is gradually emerging. The LAG is a partnership that effectively implements the local development approach agreed by the community.

Bring together the various stakeholders – the main local active players:

- representatives of the administration (local government);
- Businesses;
- Non-governmental organizations;
- Representatives of the population – involve different groups of society, such as women, young people, seniors, to ensure the widest possible representation.

The LAG should bring together public and private partners, ensure a good balance and represent all existing local interest groups from the different socio-economic sectors of the area concerned. At the decision-making level, private partners and associations must represent at least 50% of the local partnership.

The second model can be used when there is no need or desire to build an additional structure and/or when there are clear advantages relying on the administrative capacity of an experienced partner. In this case, the experienced partner may become the "responsible person" for legal and administrative purposes, while the other partners are involved in decision-making or in the project selection committee. However, this model must also use the principles of representation, openness, accountability and transparency applicable in the first model. In order to ensure the real implementation of high-quality strategies through an engaging and effective partnership, the main tasks to be carried out by the LAG are:

- building the capacity of local actors to design and implement activities, including by enhancing their project management capacity;
- to develop a non-discriminatory and transparent selection procedure and objective criteria that avoid conflicts of interest, which ensure that at least 50% of the votes in selection decisions go to partners other than public authorities and allow selection to be carried out by a written procedure;
- ensure, in the selection of actions, coherence with community-led local development strategies, prioritising those actions according to their contribution to the achievement of the objectives of that strategy;
- preparing and publishing calls for tenders or a permanent procedure for the submission of projects, including the definition of selection criteria;
- receive and evaluate aid applications;
- select the actions and determine the amount of aid and, where appropriate, submit proposals for the final verification of compliance to the body responsible prior to approval;
- monitor the implementation of the community-led local development strategy and supported actions and carry out specific evaluation activities related to that strategy.

The managing authority is responsible for selecting the LAG, ensuring a non-discriminatory and transparent selection procedure!

Each partnership must assess whether it has the necessary skills and experience in the field to fulfil the planned tasks or whether it must seek external assistance. Both models described above can be used to coordinate more than one funding stream.

The LAG is an effective tool in promoting sustainable development for the following reasons:

- The LAG concentrates and pools the human and financial resources available in the public, private, civil society and voluntary sectors;
- The LAG brings together local actors in collective projects and multidisciplinary actions to achieve synergies, a common ideological basis and the critical mass needed to improve the economic competitiveness of the area;
- by reducing the likelihood of conflicts and facilitating negotiated solutions through consultation and debate, the LAG intensifies dialogue and cooperation between the various actors in rural areas, who often have little experience of joint cooperation;
- through interactions between different partners, the LAG contributes to the process of adaptation and change in the agricultural sector (e.g. high-quality products, the food chain), the integration of environmental issues into the decision-making process, the diversification of the rural economy and the improvement of the quality of life.

Specific LAGs can be set up for LEADER support, and partnerships that already existed in the past can also be used as a basis. As a group of practitioners with decision-making powers, the LAG is a model of an organisation that can have a positive impact on the achievement of political objectives. Experience has shown that, on the basis of these common features, different types of LAGs were created, explained by the different forms of regional and national political and institutional organisation, as well as by different degrees of autonomy in the area of project approval and financial management. The role and competence of the LAG has also increased over time in some Member States due to increased awareness of the LEADER approach.

During the establishment of local LEADER partnerships, training, mentoring and knowledge on rural development should be provided in order to strengthen their capacity and independence. The groups must identify common needs and objectives, invite other stakeholders to join the LAG initiative group and have a clearly defined LAG area. The result should be a signed agreement between the partners and an officially approved LAG (with its own territory and membership).

Important!

- 1) Local Action Groups (LAGs) will organise **open calls for projects**. The LAG must ensure transparency and fair competition. Competitions will help to select the best projects that meet the objectives of the development strategy.
- 2) Create a project evaluation committee that will evaluate the submitted applications. The Commission will evaluate projects on the basis of the strategy and transparent criteria that best meet the objectives of the development strategy.
- 3) Allocate funding to projects that best meet the objectives of the development strategy. Ensure transparency and fairness in the funding allocation process.
- 4) Monitor the implementation of projects to ensure that they are implemented according to plan and achieve the expected results.
- 5) Organise an exchange of experience between the LAG in Ukraine and international partners. The exchange of experience will help to gain new ideas and improve the implementation of projects.
- 6) Cooperation/networking will contribute to an increase in results. Promote the development of LEADER networks at Ukrainian level to ensure cooperation and exchange of information between different LAGs.
- 7) Inform the public about current project tenders and achievements. Communication will help to promote public engagement and support.
- 8) Foster cooperation at local, national and international levels.

STEP 4: Decide what you want to develop, accomplish, change (Strategy)

Community-led local development is changing the traditional approach to development, starting the process with a vision of where local actors want to get to in the future and what they think needs to be changed to get there. The response to local needs is the first and **funding is seen as a means of realising the vision**. Reaching a clear agreement on 'what you want to change' is the first and most important step in developing a strategy and must not be rushed. A wide range of participatory techniques can be used to achieve the goal. Traditional local development, on the other hand, is often driven on the basis of funding. Local organizations apply for funding based on deviations from the national average of certain established indicators. In this scenario, local agencies are simply the final link in the chain for receiving funding and services.

Create your own vision and let it guide you in everything you do!

- 1) Imagine – what area would you like to live in, for example, in 2040?
- 2) What needs to be done to achieve this?

A vision is like a long-term vision of development – a general idea of how you see your future. It stems from personal values and priorities. It's a broader idea of how you want your life to look in the long run.

Before setting goals, it is important to know the vision!

Goals – an action, outcome or event of a specific goal – something tangible that you can measure and complete in the short term, which is part of or leads to your vision.

STEP 5: Building capacity and skills: strengthening training and capacity

Strengthening the knowledge and capacity of the representatives of the partnership – the participants of the LAG – is a very important aspect. The tasks of LAGs often require multifaceted knowledge in different areas. The managing authority, together with its partners, is responsible for strengthening the capacity of the LAG.

It is also important to increase the knowledge of the other parties involved. Organise seminars and trainings for stakeholders at both local and national level to help them understand the LEADER approach, its principles and its essence. The principles of the LEADER approach should be well understood by local action groups. Seminars may include practical classes on project management, public engagement and strategic planning.

This is an important step in the implementation of the LEADER approach at local level. For this innovative approach to work well, local actors need to acquire the necessary skills in the field of project ideas and know-how, attract the human resources needed for specific actions and, of course, acquire the financial skills to manage these activities. In the past, this process often took place, with the necessary skills being acquired in the course of work. Today, this is facilitated by

accumulated experience. Networking and the use of other means of communication are very useful in developing such competences, as they not only provide information on LEADER, but also help to increase the interest of local actors in the preparation of the local rural development strategy and related projects, thus creating the necessary critical mass. Capacity building is not an individual but a collective activity, in which different stakeholders in rural development raise their awareness of the LEADER approach and how it is implemented, enabling them to disseminate this information, participate in the implementation of the approach and take advantage of it.

STEP 6: Prepare a local strategy for the development of the local area based on the involvement and needs of the local population (Strategy)

When developing a strategy, it is important to think about how you will use it for the development of your rural community and territory, as **the strategy will essentially reflect the community's vision for the future of your territory.**

Once there is a comprehensive agreement on what the local population wants to live in the future, what they want to change and what can help achieve this goal, what the vast area of activity is, work can continue on more detailed planning – as a goal to be achieved by preparing a local strategy. This requires objective evidence and facts about the disadvantages, advantages, opportunities and threats in the area (SWOT analysis), as well as the full participation of the local community to understand how these factors affect their basic needs and how these issues can be addressed. **The local development strategy becomes an action plan for community-led local development, and partnerships typically select and support projects according to their contribution to the strategy's objectives.**

A detailed analysis of the rural area concerned is mandatory. In such an analysis, the main focus is on determining the "territorial capital", i.e. the advantages of the territory (people, activities, landscapes, cultural and historical heritage, know-how), but not in the form of an inventory list, but by looking at the unique features that can be developed. An analysis of these features and the main points identified in this territorial analysis should identify possible local development strategies that are suitable for the rural area concerned. Territorial analysis forces all local actors to see the perspective of the area in the medium and long term. While expert expertise is useful in such an analysis, it is important to provide an opportunity to publicly discuss the various visions for the future and the best strategy for the development of the area and to achieve the widest possible consensus of opinion.

In the past, many strategies were overly based on general objectives, such as "improving the quality of life" or ensuring "sustainable development". Part of the reason is that strategy developers often encounter relatively high uncertainty and want to maintain flexibility to be able

to respond to changes and unforeseen events. However, there are other ways of ensuring flexibility, and overly general objectives can make the strategy almost useless and expose local interest groups to the influence, making monitoring almost impossible. In order to improve the quality of strategies, the European Commission believes that they must be based on a clear "intervention logic" agreed by the local community and based, for example, on the following questions: "what do we want to change?", "what do we want to achieve by year X?", "what will the achievements look like?", "what will be the evidence that we have worked successfully?".

In the 2014-2020 period, evidence should take the form of clearly measurable "outcomes" of objectives, such as how many people participated in the training, as well as "results", such as how many people got a job as a result of the training. As regards results, "objectives can be expressed in quantitative or qualitative terms" and the European Commission recommends that they be formulated in terms of "SMART".

SMART goals

1. **Specific** – clearly articulating what the strategy will address and by what means.
2. **Measurable** – including a basis for measurement and a measurable goal, expressed in quantitative or qualitative terms.
3. **Achievable** – technically feasible within the framework of the proposed strategy.
4. **Realistic** – taking into account available resources, time allotted and size of target groups, etc.
5. **Time bound** – includes the period and date by which the goal must be achieved.

In order to set more specific targets for results, the Commission recommends that local partnerships and managing authorities agree on methods that will allow strategies to adapt to changing circumstances and take into account lessons learned from past experience. The best way to achieve this is to include a requirement for evaluation.

Important!

- 1) **Perform a local area analysis** – perform SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis to identify the strengths, needs and development potential of the area. This will help to develop a targeted development strategy.
- 2) **Involve citizens, entrepreneurs and other actors in the development of the strategy** – organise public consultations, such as population surveys, focus groups, to ensure that the strategy reflects the needs and views of the local community. Locals are not development experts; It is important to use simple language and methods so that the process is equally understandable to all involved. Involve two experts/facilitators in

the meetings of the working group, one of whom acts as moderator/coordinator and the other as rapporteur/rapporteur.

- 3) **Define goals, priorities, actions and expected results** – agree on needs, a 5-year strategy and a two-year work plan. Formulate 3-5 development priorities, such as youth employment, tourism, environment, social entrepreneurship. Define specific goals and actions that will help you achieve those goals.

STEP 7: Prepare the action plan and the application for funding (Strategy)

Once the partnership has agreed what it wants to develop, what it wants to change, and a clear 'operational logic' has been established, indicating how these changes can be measured and what type of action can contribute to success, these general objectives need to be translated into a real action plan and funding application. There are many detailed indications on how to implement this stage. At this stage, all applicants face the challenge of providing enough accurate information to make the plan credible, while maintaining flexibility to respond to unforeseen circumstances. Member States, regions and local partnerships are tackling this problem in different ways. However, it is important to demonstrate that the time and human and financial resources allocated to the main types of activity correspond to pre-identified needs and that there are reasonable opportunities to implement the desired changes. In addition, the partnership must demonstrate that it has the necessary skills, systems and procedures to ensure that the plan can be implemented in an effective and transparent manner.

One of the best ways to check that the objectives of the strategy are realistic is to analyze the actions that need to be taken to achieve the objectives in question. An action plan is necessary to assess at least the following four points:

- 1) What types of actions are used?
- 2) Who will be responsible for their implementation?
- 3) When should they be carried out and in what order (e.g. pre-launch training)?
- 4) How much will everything cost in rough estimates?

STEP 8: Beneficiaries implement projects and receive funding (Strategy)

The tasks of selecting a local partnership project include:

- analysis of the amount of the project's contribution to the local strategy;
- application at national or regional level of any set of standard criteria (e.g. job creation, employment for women or disadvantaged groups, use of local resources, enabling effects, etc.);

- the development and application of any local criteria (e.g. priority for areas or groups with special needs or locally specific sectors and challenges);
- alignment with other strategies;
- ensuring the viability of the project (markets, technology, operational and financial viability);
- examination of aspects such as excess aid (will the project be implemented in the same way without aid?) and relocation (will aid for one business area not cause problems for another?);
- verification of the ability of the project promoters to implement the project;
- ensuring that the project has or can obtain all the necessary permits and licences;
- prior conformity check before submitting the project to the managing authority.

When evaluating individual projects by partnerships, it is important to allow partnerships to provide additional support to those who offer a specific contribution to a local strategy, are more innovative or support particularly disadvantaged groups. It also provides groups with flexibility when discussing projects submitted by project promoters in order to decide whether they fund all or part of the project and/or divide the project into phases or parts.

Tip: Give priority to small projects that are important to local people!

STEP 9: Create a framework for periodically reviewing, evaluating and updating the strategy, monitoring (Strategy)

Local partnerships need a mechanism to measure how they achieve the expected results and to learn from the mistakes made and the successes made. In its report on the results of LEADER, the European Court of Auditors recognised the need to improve the monitoring, self-evaluation and external evaluation of local development strategies, as well as to include regular activities as part of the 'learning by doing' cycle. While improvements are still needed in this area, a number of useful guidelines and toolkits have been developed to do this without getting bogged down in a mass of irrelevant data links. It takes time and perseverance to implement these eight stages correctly. However, the European Commission has also stressed the need for preparatory support for these procedures. Even if such work has been done before, the local population in general welcomes and is happy to engage in the process of building a common roadmap for the future.

Both monitoring and evaluation are necessary to respond to the needs of the managing authority. They should not be seen as merely a formal requirement to justify expenditure and should be designed in such a way as to provide useful information for the management of the local partnership. By incorporating regular **monitoring and evaluation strategies into the strategy**, partnerships gain a tool **to know what works well and what cannot be used and how**

the strategy needs to be adjusted to adapt to changing circumstances. The combination of "clear and measurable outcomes and results" and "description of evaluation procedures" allows local partnerships to develop more concrete and realistic strategies, which are also more resilient and flexible.

LAGs must provide the following information:

- on the systems and mechanisms they offer for the collection and processing of relevant financial and performance data related to the indicators and objectives set. These data must be clearly aligned with the objectives of the strategy;
- how it is planned to assess the results of its activities in implementing the specific tasks of community-led local development;
- proposals for the dissemination of results and their use in the area concerned, for example by making adjustments to the local development strategy and its implementation;
- what will be their own contribution to the monitoring and evaluation of community-led local development and programme monitoring and evaluation at regional and national level.

Set up a monitoring system that monitors the progress, results and impact of projects. The monitoring system will help to assess the effectiveness of projects and make the necessary improvements.

Binding legislation

This section lists the European Union legislation used in the preparation of this publication. The rules listed here include provisions that directly relate to LEADER or relate to different aspects of the implementation of CAP Strategic Plans (including LEADER).

Legislation related to the 2023-2027 programme period

European Union rules relating to LEADER:

- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1060](#) [Common Provisions Regulation] (Articles 31 to 34 contain provisions relating to community-led local development (CLLD), CLLD strategies, local action groups and support from funds for community-led local development);
- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/2115](#) [CAP Strategic Plan Regulation] (defines LEADER as community-led local development referred to in Article 31 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 and part of the cooperation intervention set out in Article 77 and sets a minimum of 5% of the total EAFRD contribution to the LEAAP plan).

Commission implementing rules:

- [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2022/1475](#) on detailed rules for the evaluation of CAP Strategic Plans and the provision of information for monitoring and evaluation (the Regulation contains provisions on the inclusion of LEADER Added Value Assessment in the evaluation of CAP Strategic Plans, and Article 14 and Annex VII of this Implementing Regulation provide specific information on LEADER activities and their activities);
- [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2021/2290](#) on rules on the methods for calculating the common output and result indicators set out in Annex I to the CAP Strategic Plan (Regulation (EU) 2021/2115).

Other relevant provisions and information:

Information on the indicators of the Common Agricultural Policy Performance Monitoring and Evaluation System (PMEF) is available [here](#) (indicators on the output, results, context and impact of the CAP 2023-2027 can be downloaded in the section "Towards PMEF").

- [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2022/127](#) of 7 December 2021 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2021/2116 of the European Parliament and of the Council with rules on paying agencies and other bodies, financial management, clearance of accounts, collateral and use of the euro;
- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/2116](#) [on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy] [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2021/2289](#) on

- the presentation of the content of the CAP Strategic Plans and on an electronic system for the secure exchange of information;
- [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2022/128](#) on paying agencies and other bodies, financial management, clearance of accounts, checks, collateral and transparency;
 - [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2023/860](#) amending and correcting Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/128 as regards transparency, management declaration, coordinating authority, certifying authority and certain provisions relating to the EAGF and EAFRD.

Latvian legislation

- Cabinet Regulation No. 580 "Procedures for granting State and European Union support in the intervention of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development "Implementation of activities in accordance with the community-led local development strategy, including cooperation activities and their preparation"" – <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/346333-valsts-un-eiropas-savienibas-atbalsta-pieskirsanas-kartiba-eiropas-lauksaimniecibas-fonda-lauku-attistibai-intervence-darbibu>
- Cabinet Regulation No. 113 of 7 March 2023 "General Procedures for the Granting, Administration and Supervision of State and European Union Support for Rural and Fisheries Development" (overheads) – <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/340024-valsts-un-eiropas-savienibas-atbalsta-pieskirsanas-administresanas-un-uzraudzibasvispareja-kartiba-lauku-un-zivsaimniecibas>
- Cabinet Regulation No. 509 "Procedures for Granting State and European Union Support for the Preparation and Implementation of Community-Led Local Development Strategies for 2023-2027" – <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/334857-valsts-un-eiropas-savienibas-atbalsta-pieskirsanas-kartiba-sabiedribas-virzitas-vietejas-attistibas-strategiju-20232027-gadam-sagatavosanai-un-istenosanai>
- [Cabinet Regulation No. 352 "Procedures for Granting State and European Union Support for Ensuring the Operation of Local Action Groups and for the Management, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Implementation of the Community-Led Local Development Strategy for 2023-2027"](#)
- [Cabinet Regulation No. 141 Procedures for Granting State and European Union Support to Local Action Groups for Interterritorial and Transnational Cooperation in accordance with the Community-Led Local Development Strategy for the 2023-2027 Programming Period](#)

