

“CONNECTING RURAL EUROPE – LEARNING FROM THE PAST, PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE” – LESSONS LEARNT–

Summary

This document is based on the 48 harvesting sheets collected from the event participants and the more than 140 lessons learnt and recorded by them during the event.

The lessons learnt are presented according to three general themes (Cooperation, networking and LEADER / Stakeholder involvement & RDP implementation /Other) and the type of rural development stakeholders reporting on them in the following order¹:

1. Local stakeholders
2. Local action group (LEADER)
3. Network Support Units (NRN)
4. Managing Authority/Paying Agency
5. European Organization
6. EU official
7. Other

Lessons learnt by local stakeholders

Cooperation, networking and LEADER

- Transnational cooperation has actually pretty simple but profound obstacles: language and different attitudes.
- Networking in new frames without a predesigned process can be chaotic, but also creative.

Stakeholder involvement & RDP implementation

- Different stakeholders have different needs and communication methods.
- Social innovation is needed to better connect with people.
- Involving stakeholders is a challenge which seems to be common for many of us.
- Sharing stories can provide ideas on several issues, although the stories might be different from place to place.
- Importance of strengthening animation skills - importance of methods to involve all actors.
- Need of storytelling by all stakeholders of what has been done during the past 6 years to motivate others to continue their work and share the experience.
- Involving the local stakeholders of an area could be the best way to find and implement solutions that otherwise wouldn't be possible to employ.

Other

- ENRD is seen very differently at different organisational levels: NRNs know it very well, but local organisations don't get that much information.
- EIP-AGRI has to solve real problems from the practical side.
- There is much more about the ENRD than I knew of - must have a follow-up.

Lessons learnt by local action groups

Cooperation, networking and LEADER

- Cooperation can only be done with the support of local and European authorities.

¹ Please note that the classification of lessons learnt by participants is slightly arbitrary. Some lessons learnt may belong to more than one category at the same time.

- Main challenges of cooperation and some useful forms of networking support.
- Good practices from French LAGs in TNC.
- Systems or ideas about how to improve TNC in our country.
- CLLD is the most important way to realize the next step in developing rural areas.
- What CLLD really means and how to promote it.
- Networking on several levels.
- Most of the LAGs don't have enough information about the multi-funding of local action strategies for development.
- CLLD needs to be simpler. There must be a minimum level of requirements for small grant projects. Also the LAGs that exist in this period must continue working and must be supported.
- Networks need time to become effective.
- Multi-funding is the future! It's a big challenge but there is no other way to build the CLLD approach.
- LAGs need more support from MAs. MAs have to understand that we are the partners in the process and we have the same objectives.
- The investment in networking is absolutely necessary (at each level) to create the new CLLD culture and to continue the LEADER approach.
- LEADER can build a 'new culture of cooperation' in a region. LEADER helps to see more than the own 'tower" $1+1 \neq 2$ but $1+1=11$

Stakeholder involvement & RDP implementation

- We must `build bridges` around Europe and be closer to Brussels in order to achieve our local strategies.
- Key words = thematic groups as a method of permanent work, capitalisation of the best practices of the past, cooperation with innovation/contact/exchange
- We all are in the same boat (MA, PA and LAG) and have to `row` in the same direction.
- Working on single issues/themes is more efficient than working for general topics (i.e. focus groups, seminars). A very important lesson is that we have to apply also with our stakeholders at local level.
- National and transnational networks need to deal with legislation.
- Organise more social events to empower the community.
- Increase the use of peer-to-peer exchange and seminars.
- Evaluate resource use for stakeholder investment.
- The importance of involving local stakeholders.
- The role of cooperation and trust among stakeholders.
- It's necessary to work with multi-funding programmes in RD for the next period.
- Thematic work groups for organising the different services of the ENRD. Always look on the bright side of life!

Other

- Multi-funding is the topic to deal with.
- Importance of facts and figures.
- The importance of EIP-AGRI for the future 2014-2020 RDP
- Knowing the 'usefulness' of NRNs must be an objective for all actors in RD. Coordination obtained from CLLD
- More communication and supporting for the regional policy.
- It has been very interesting to participate in this meeting as a LAG manager, to be able to express my opinion and contribute to improving the ENRD.
- Trust is very important.
- A good opportunity to establish contacts with other managers and other countries.

Lessons learnt by Network Support Units (NRN)

Cooperation, networking and LEADER

- Networking is the people, not the institutions.
- The cooperation between rural and urban is important.
- Interesting classification of networks in OAR presentation.
- Promote cooperation with other networks.

Stakeholder involvement & RDP implementation

- There is no such thing as free social media. The tools might be free but someone must be responsible for them. It takes time and also costs money.
- Focus groups and internet are excellent and interactive tools.
- Work to promote the involvement of stakeholders at all levels.
- Support the definition of new tools and new strategies to promote rural development.
- All groups and individuals who have expertise in agriculture and rural economy should participate in RD programs.

Other

- Importance of social innovation is increasing in discussions. This topic must be a priority for the future.
- We have been talking about the same thing for years. There is a lot of knowledge and there are lots of ideas on how to improve networking and the implementation of LEADER. Who are the people making the decision on an event like that? What is the real output? And I think I can say that all participants have the same opinion and a common goal.
- Interaction with the EU - we can learn from each other
- Keep it simple.
- Importance of intensifying the networking action at local level, using good language.
- Opportunity to encourage the involvement of different networks.

Lessons learnt by Managing Authorities/Paying Agencies

Cooperation, networking and LEADER

- Effective networking of NRN in particular when it comes to dissemination of information (from both EU and national perspective) should be fully supported by MA
- NRNs need more resources
- It is important to use well-functioning networks and learn from them.
- Importance of the pilot-areas using CLLD in the 2014-2020 period in the way to spread the results to convince other regions/Member States and give CLLD a chance in the period after 2020.
- Finnish model of LEADER/LAG management book
- Don't know how cooperation with other networks (ERDF, ESF, etc.) will be.

Stakeholder involvement & RDP implementation

- Tackle the different national regulations (used for implementing the EU rules) by giving information about the several differences and national/regional up-to-date contact persons on the ENRD website.
- MA's role needs to be improved by establishing clearer rules and framework.
- Focus group work and thematic seminars of the ENRD were very good and should be continued.

Other

- New possibilities, ideas need more time.
- Keep organising network events: face-to-face contact is needed to find partners to cooperate with.
- The situation in different parts of EU in rural development is very different.
- Discussion on this level is far away from practice.
- Different MS have the same problems.
- Every experience is good and useful during a process. We can learn from the bad experience too. We can develop ourselves.
- Every day is a new day to learn. Challenges are good to find the solutions.
- When carrying out capacity building activities please don't forget the MAs. The evaluation network is looking to expand this.

Lessons learnt by European Organization representatives

Cooperation, networking and LEADER

- I strongly realised that there are a lot of differences among the MS in EU in terms of planning and implementing CLLD - time schedules, rules, MA, approaches. I think these differences create an environment for complicated implementation of CLLD. What works in one state doesn't work properly in another state due to different networks, structures, bureaucracy, etc. These differences can be considered as the obstacles for transfer of good practices as far as the implementation of CLLD is concerned.

Stakeholder involvement & RDP implementation

- More involvement of actors in RD participatory approach.
- Volunteer actors in RD need more support.
- Adapt the message/communication to stakeholders (especially farmers).
- Keep the link between all stakeholders at local level.
- Promote the translation of results and their accessibility to local stakeholders.
- Communication about RDP and networking needs the right language related to the target group.
- Talk more about what we do and less about how we do it.

Other

- The organisers seem to listen not to teach.
- The organisations (COPA and national members) should take more advantage of ENRD in order to help farmers. National networks must have space to work.
- EIP-AGRI's goals are very unclear.

Lessons learnt by EU officials

Cooperation, networking and LEADER

- Each network has to have a clear purpose, target and actions.

Other

- EIP-AGRI is quite new and therefore there is a need to inform all stakeholders about its activities and the outcomes.
- A good single brand is essential (i.e. Finnish LEADER logo).

Lessons learnt by `Other`

Cooperation, networking and LEADER

- Networks are key components for RDP implementation.
- Networks at EU level still need to strengthen their role as a hub for sharing information in order to enhance capitalization.
- "Common branding approach" of LEADER is essential and could be adapted to other spheres of activities - simplification, consistency, clearer message to a wider public.
- Networks are seen as ENRD + NRNs and not the great variety of local, regional and national actors as they should be.
- Some risks of multi-funding CLLD are clearer - opportunities were already clear before the event.