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for Georgia

ENPARD: Support to Agriculture
and Rural Development



EUROPEAN LEADER ASSOCIATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

ENPARD project "Strengthening Rural Development Models in Georgia"

Analytical report and expert opinion about establishment and operations
of local action groups network (GALAG) in Georgia

Brussels, 2018



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CLLD	Community-Led Local Development
CMEF	Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
CPR	Common Provision Regulation
EC	European Commission
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EFF	European Fisheries Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESI Funds	European Structural and Investment Funds (EAFRD, EMFF, ERDF, ESF and Cohesion Fund)
EU	European Union
IPARD	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for Rural Development
LAG	Local Action Group
LDS	Local Development Strategy
LEADER	Liaisons entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale
MA	Managing Authority
RDP	Rural Development Programme
PA	Paying Agency

1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The objective of this report is to propose the most suitable network model to establish and operate network of LAGs (GALAG) in Georgia. This report includes overview about similar networks in other countries, suggestions for performing the identification of the GALAG members, proposing the structure, organizational format, modes of operations of GALAG, suggestions for co-operational activities with other EU LEADER-networks.

For the preparation of the report document European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD) formed an expert panel out of 6 international experts. This document has been prepared by rural development experts Radim Srsen (LAG representative, Czech Republic), Maria Murciano (LEADER Network, Spain), Stefan Niedermoser (LEADER Network, Austria), Marion Eckhardt (LAG representative, Sweden, Kristiina Tammets (LAG representative, Estonia) and Kadri Tillemann (project coordinator).

Networking is one of the key principles of the LEADER-approach. Networking within the LAG is a must, but networking with other LAGs and stakeholders on the regional, national and international level is very important. The national network organization of LAG's is the platform to enable and enhance networking and co-operation of LAG's. The need and necessity for this kind of network organizations have been acknowledged by EU LAG's already at the very beginning of the LEADER-implementation since 1991.

Establishment of LEADER-networks all over Europe has proven in practice that sharing know-how, sharing ideas, sharing best practices and also sharing common experiences will provide a good knowledge for developing each LAG region but also developing the whole country and LEADER-system.

There are four main types of activities the LEADER networks should focus on:

- Operational activities;
- Strategic activities;
- Organizational activities;
- Value-based activities.

A good network needs to reflect on all of those 4 aspects. There should be an operative part of the network, which is able to exchange information, reacts on requests of members/partners and performs effective communication. The strategic part of the network should be open for new processes, for trendsetting activities and for setting up frameworks, declarations and statements, which positively influence the LEADER-system. The organizational part of the network needs to make sure, that the technical and organizational requirements are met to actively run the network. That means that structures (how many representatives, who is allowed to vote and speak for the network, financial arrangements etc.) are set up and executed clearly. Additionally, the network role is to contribute to the development and maintenance of the LEADER-values and its' key principles. Even if networks are different in

terms of operative, strategic and organizational activities, they are sharing common values and goal to use networking and communication to make LEADER/CLLD more effective and successful rural development tool.

The report is going to be based on principles stated in ENPARD project proposal and partnership agreement between ELARD and Mercy Corps. Following pre-defined aspects are followed thorough the report:

- This network - termed the Georgian Association of LAGs (GALAG) - will be a conduit for information exchange and learning across the country and will act as an advocate for community-led local development with key state and non-state actors.
- The aim is that two members from each LAG (approximately 16 representatives in total) will volunteer to be founding members of GALAG. These members would be supported by a GALAG Coordinator, who would be financed through project funds and based in Tbilisi at the Mercy Corps office. It is felt that there is no requirement for GALAG to have a physical and costly operational structure (salaried staff, office space, transport etc.) at this initial phase, but rather that it be a fluid structure with members working from their own localities and meeting only for trainings and events.

The following report is divided into 3 main parts:

In the first part gives an overview about similar networks in other countries. For this we use the results of the survey that was done among ELARD members. As the representatives of ELARD-members are often also involved or in charge of national networks their personal experiences are pointed out in this part of the report as well. Based on this survey and huge personal experience good examples are shown how a GALAG could be set up in Georgia as well as practical examples of achievements and activities of networks among Europe are illustrated.

The second part proposes a set of suggestions how the Network of Georgian LAGs could be established and developed. The report takes into account, that now there are already some existing structures, financial and organizational support available for Georgian LAGS, but it needs also to be clear how the sustainability of the GALAG could be achieved. This chapter concentrates mainly on the operative and organizational activities for the network.

Last chapter of this report is conclusive and further recommendations are made.

2. OVERVIEW ABOUT SIMILAR NETWORKS IN OTHER COUNTRIES AND ANALYSIS OF THEIR MAIN FEATURES

This chapter gives an overview of LEADER networks in other countries and their main characteristics, financial features, main activities and competencies. It summarizes good characteristics/features/models for an independent LAGs network and includes which are the important issues to pay attention and/or avoid while establishing and developing a network. The analysis is based on the information of ELARD (European LEADER Association for Rural Development) member networks across Europe.

Main characteristics of LEADER networks in Europe

ELARD has member networks in 25 countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia-FYROM, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden). Most of member countries are from EU member states and 2 members (Macedonia-FYROM and Serbia) are from accessing countries. **ELARD member networks include about 1700 LAGs as members of their networks, but they usually represent all LAGs in their country which is more than 2000 LAGs altogether.** Number of LAGs is very different in different countries. For example there are 26 LAGs in Estonia and Denmark but in big countries like France and Germany there are more than 300 LAGs.

ELARD member organizations are quite diverse, involving LAGs but quite often also different stakeholders at local, regional and national level. Most of our members are National LEADER Networks (networks of LAGs), but we have also 6 Rural Development Networks represented (networks that involve other rural actors in addition to LAGs) among our members. There are National LEADER Networks (e.g. Czech, Estonia, France, Portugal, Sweden, Slovakia, Poland) who don't represent any other members, only LAGs. But there are members who represent additionally to LAGs also other rural actors, which are mainly local community NGOs (rural women, ecologists, rural youth, craftsmen), village associations, enterprises and farmers, individuals interested in rural development, regional rural development networks, but also regional development centres, universities. A few member networks represent FLAGs (Fisheries Local Action Groups) and urban LAGs-type of organizations. In the current study report all different types of ELARD member networks are called as LEADER networks. The report bases on the analysis of 20 LEADER Networks.

Financial features of LEADER networks

Financial features of LEADER networks vary a lot. Almost half of ELARD member networks (8) have a budget of more than EUR 150,000 per year and 4 members have a budget between EUR 50,000 and 100,000 per year. But there are members (5) whose budget is much smaller, being below EUR 30,000 per year and members (2) that even have no budget at all and where all work is carried out on a voluntary basis, please see an overview on Diagram 1.

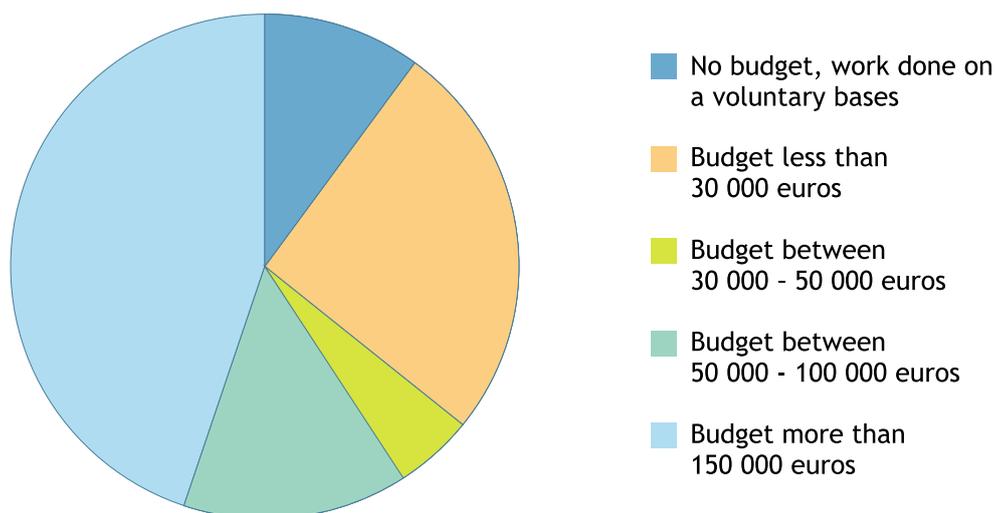


Diagram 1. Average annual budget of LEADER networks

A membership fee constitutes a main source of income for 6 LEADER networks and makes up more than 85% of their budget. **The rest of the LEADER networks use very varied schemes of financing.** They apply for different projects and provide services by organizing seminars, training courses, and research. Quite often, the membership fee represents less than 10% of their budget. 2 networks are financed from the State budget from the technical assistance resources (Hungary, Ireland).

To calculate the membership fee, 9 members use a model of a fixed fee, 4 members don't collect fees and 7 members use different calculation methods that are mainly related to the budget of the member/LAG and the features of the area and population. The level of membership fee per local action group varies from EUR 8 to 4,500 EUR per year. **Fees paid by LAGs range mostly between EUR 50 and 600.** Table 1 below gives information about the total annual membership fees collected by LEADER networks.

MEMBERSHIP FEES COLLECTED ANNUALLY IN €.	
Membership fees in total collected on LAG levels in €	Country
No membership fee collected	Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Ireland
< 2,000	Lithuania, Macedonia-FYROM, Serbia
2,000 - 5,000	Croatia, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia
15,000 - 30,000	Finland, Sweden
55,000 - 65,000	Czech Republic, Estonia, Portugal
>200,000	Spain, France

Table 1. Membership fees collected annually in €.

To conclude, it can be said that a membership fee is not a significant source of income for most of LEADER networks. **Moreover, LEADER networks across Europe are very skilled at involving different funds and developing their own budget and economic capacity.**

Activities and competences of LEADER networks

Main activities and competences as well as short success stories of LEADER networks are presented in Annex 1 (based on the description collected by ELARD in 2016). Some concrete examples about the LEADER network features and main functions are presented on pages 10-16.

The main activities of LEADER networks across Europe are following:

- Advocacy and lobbying at national level;
- Networking with other rural actors at national level;
- Contributing to the LEADER legislation and RDP (Rural Development Plan) implementation;
- Implementing different projects and finding various funds;
- Networking and informing their members;
- Training, increasing the knowledge of their members, exchange of experience (seminars, conferences), data collection and research;
- Communication and promotional activities of LEADER at national and international level;
- Networking and communication at international level.

In addition LEADER networks are very active in participating in EU consultative groups (LEADER Subgroup, Rural Networks Assembly, etc) and other international organizations and bodies (European Economic and Social Committee, European Rural Communities Alliance - ERCA, Partnership for Rural Europe - PREPARE, European Rural Parliament, etc).

On Member State level LEADER networks are actively involved into the work of national rural development policy and establishment of LEADER/rural development working groups and commissions under different governmental bodies whose main aim is to contribute to the design of legislation and rural development policy. Please see short overview about existence of LEADER subgroups in different countries from **Annex 2**.

Main LEADER implementation partners are described in the Table 2 below. It is very important to achieve good partnership between all these actors on all levels. Everyday work to implement LEADER happens usually horizontally between partners on the same level. National LEADER networks are key actors to enable LAGs advocacy and networking on national and European level.

**MAIN LEADER IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS AT LOCAL,
NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN LEVEL**

Local level	Local Action Groups (LAGs) with their different stakeholders (communities, local municipalities, businesses, cooperation partners)				
National and/or regional level	National independent LEADER Network or Rural Development Network including LAGs	National Rural Network (NSU, governmental subinstitution)	Managing Authority (usually Ministry of Agriculture and Paying Agency)	National Parliament and its commissions	National level cooperation partners, umbrella organization, networks
	Sometimes LEADER Networks have different thematic working groups.	Different rural development working groups (e.g. cooperation, innovation, rural actors working group, etc)	Monitoring Committee, different working groups, commissions (e.g. LEADER coordination working group, RDP working groups, etc)	Different working groups, commissions (e.g. Rural development sub-group, LEADER sub-group, etc)	Farmers, Tourism Association, Fisheries Union, Village Movement Association, etc
European level	European LEADER Association (ELARD)	European Rural Network (ENRD)	European Commission different Directorates (mainly for LEADER DG Agri, Regio)	European Parliament	European level institutions and cooperation partners, umbrella organizations, networks
	ELARD doesnt have different working groups, the work is done by Assembly, Council, Secretariat	Different thematic working groups (e.g LEADER cooperation, innovation, simplification, etc)	Different dialogue groups, sub-groups (LEADER Sub-group, Civil Dialogue Group, Rural Networks Assembly and Steering Group, etc)	Different committees (e.g Committee of Agriculture and Rural Development, Fisheries Committee, etc)	European Economic and Social Committee, Committee of Regions, European Rural Parliament partners (PREPARE, ERCA), European Countryside Movement, etc)

Table 2. Main LEADER implementation partners at local, national and European level

Structure of LEADER networks

LEADER networks across Europe are mostly independent registered associations - NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisation). In some countries there are LEADER networks without official registered body and the network bases on the agreement of LAGs as Forum of LAGs. This Forum format has been used usually at the early stage of negotiations between LAGs forming the network in order to handle risks and deal with building a common ground for the new organisation before its establishment.

The highest decision making body is usually the Assembly of the Network (General Assembly meeting), which consists of all the representatives of members. For more operational duties the Assembly usually designates the Council or Board to take care of the management of the Association and act as advisory unit for the Office of the LEADER Network.

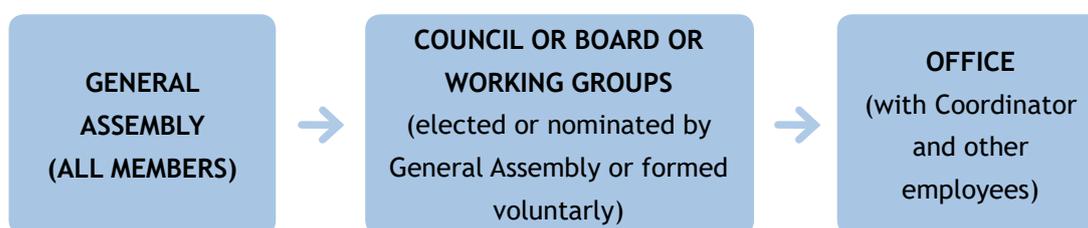


Diagram 2. The most common structure of LEADER network

Number of employees in LEADER networks varies a lot. For example there are 8 employees in Finland, 6 in Czech Republic, 5 in Macedonia-FYROM, 4 in both Portugal and Spain, 3 in Lithuania. The other networks have 1-2 employees who often work part-time. In Denmark, Greece, Serbia and Sweden the work is done on a voluntary basis.

Examples of some LEADER networks and their establishment process, structure, their main functions

Austrian LEADER-forum - The two-fold LAG network structure

History/background

In Austria LEADER started in 1995 with 31 LAGs. In the period 2014-2020 there are 77 LAGs working with the CLLD-LEADER principle. From 1995 to 2006 LEADER was a single-programme and an external company paid by the ministry dealt with network issues. With the mainstreaming from 2007 the network got huge and LEADER issues were not that present any more. Starting with 2008 some LAG-Managers formed an informal network to meet regularly and share experience. One person was declared as speaker, but with no legal framework around. At the beginning of the current period in 2015 the LEADER-forum Austria, a private

association of LAGs was established. Every province voted for 2 representatives in the board of the Forum (in total 14 members in the board) and a chairman was elected. Now the board is newly elected every 3 years. Within several months all 77 Austrian LAGs got members of the LEADER-forum Austria. The representative/chairman has now a formal status and therefore he is the official representative and can be invited and take part in all relevant meetings and working groups at national level and also EU level. The service unit (NSU) for the National Rural Network (NRN) is still co-existing and has a sub-section for LEADER. This one is still paid by the ministry. There is good cooperation and an ongoing know-how exchange, **but key issues of „LEADER-lobbying“ in a wider sense moved to the LEADER-forum.** Conversely the role of the NSU is more of a service provider for LAGs in terms of capacity building/ training, know-how and good-practice exchange and facilitation of national and transnational co-operation

Characteristics/Financial features

The LEADER-forum Austria has no current office or employed staff. **The place of management is at the LAG office of the LEADER-forum president.** The president is obliged to be a manager of a LAG in Austria. Members of the LEADER-forum are LAGs, represented at the General Assembly by the LAG manager and the LAG chairman. All members meet at least once a year at General Assembly. The board meets quarterly weather face-to-face or via video-conference. The fee for the LEADER-forum is very low for a single LAG. As there is no current office and staff the running costs are very low. **Every LAG is paying the membership fee EUR 100 per year.** Out of this fee only costs for meetings and travel-costs are covered. Every thing is on voluntary basis. In cooperation with National Rural Network capacity building activities are carried out.

Main activities

Main activities of the LEADER-forum can be split up into **internal, national and international activities.** Within the internal activities the network provides information to use for the managements, organises social events and formal meetings in order to exchange information between LAG managers. National activities **contain the work on current and future programming of the legal framework for LEADER** and the participation in national meetings with the National Rural Network and the Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism (in charge for LEADER) as well as other stakeholders. International activities are: **attending international events and workshops, membership in ELARD and working-groups and sub-groups of ENRD and the European Commission.** The National Rural Network and the NSU mainly provide measures to support a smooth implementation of the Austrian rural development programme, which LEADER is a part of. This contains different kinds of „one-time“- events (workshops, seminars, conferences), coordination of thematic working groups, running a project database as well as offers for more spontaneous needs (web-meetings, „dial-a-seminar“, info-service).

Lessons learned

An informal network is good, but a formal network opens more doors. **With a legal status it is possible to claim for regular presence in important groups and meetings.** This wouldn't have been possible with the National Rural Network alone. Although run by a group

of consultancy companies, the NSU is not independent by definition and cannot take up lobbying functions. For Austria it was a good decision to keep the membership fee for LAGs very low, because therefore LAGs got quickly members of the network and different tasks and deliverables could be spread within the wide community and no staff was needed. Close cooperation between the LEADER-forum and the National Rural Network has seen as good advantage.

REDR (Spanish Network for Rural Development)

History/Background

REDR was constituted in 1995 as non-profit association with the objective of promoting a model of comprehensive and sustainable rural development. REDR is currently made up of 11 Regional Networks, which in turn include over 200 Rural Development Groups. It's a valid and necessary tool to act as a speaker of the LAGs at the local, regional and national administrations.

The network has permanent office in Madrid and 4 permanent employed staff. Representatives of 17 regions in Spain form Steering Committee. The president is obliged to be a LAG president and Regional Network President. Members of the network are the LAGs, represented in the General Assembly by the Chairman. All members meet at least once a year, the board meets quarterly, always face-to-face meetings.

Characteristics/Financial features

Fees: each LAG pays EUR 1.200 per year membership-fee. Since 1999 we signed an annual agreement of collaboration (REDR-Ministry of Agriculture) for the support of associations in national rural development networks. REDR receives annual grants for conducting programs and social cooperation under the Tax allocation Income Tax of individual. Started in 2004 until now.

Main activities

The main activities of the network can be split up into:

- **Lobby/advocacy.** REDR takes part in many working groups, consultative committees, and round tables, national and international commissions;
- **Communication and promotion:** REDR greatly supports its Department of Communication and Media, so as to give more prominence to rural development groups and rural areas in general. www.redr.es web page is a great reference for rural development in Europe, publishes a weekly e-bulletin and is active in the presence in Facebook and other social media;
- **Networking;**
- **National and international projects.** REDR runs projects from different and diverse donors at national and international level, such as: Ministry of Social Affairs (Spain),

Ministry of Agriculture (Spain), Spanish Agency of International Cooperation (AECID), UN Organization for Agriculture and Food (FAO), Inter-American Institute of Agriculture Cooperation (IICA), Europe Aid, ENPARD, etc. (download REDR Projects Portfolio www.redr.es);

- **Pieces of legislation.** REDR had collaborated with the legislation team that supports and compiles an important law about the rural development in Spain, the “Law for the sustainable development of the rural environment”. This set of measures unified criteria about the application of the rural development and LEADER funds in Spain, also is the set of laws that recognize rural development as one of the fundamental axes in the country’s regional development.
- **Events.** Every year, REDR organizes an annual Conference, which brings together the most important voices of rural development in Spain. Legislators, local administrations, stakeholders, LAGs, etc. This is a great opportunity to take the pulse of existing consideration on rural development, as well as to inspire decision makers and the members of development networks. The Spanish Network is also responsible for promoting, co-organizing, disseminating and supporting various appointments throughout the year in order to bring the new legislation closer to its members, put pressure on local governments and the national government on the importance of LEADER and second pillar and keep its members informed of the news about the legislation.
- **Publications.** REDR periodically publishes a series of thematic publications, which are disseminated among its members and in public about different aspects and protagonists of rural areas in Spain. REDR has published specific publications on opportunities for rural entrepreneurs, youth, rural women, innovation and ICT in rural areas. The publications can be consulted online and represent an solid documentary source for those interested in rural development in Spain, a support for those who wish to have valid information and a reliable source of inspiration for rural entrepreneurs.

Lessons learned

A formal network and legal status is needed to raise the voice of rural population and claim presence and establish a permanent dialogue at regional, national and international level.

German LEADER Network

History/Background

Germany is a big country with diverse Local Development Programmes. Therefore there are a lot of differences between the provinces and it was hard to establish a network. An informal network was founded in 2009 with the aim to have one voice for German LEADER-actors in the upcoming programming period. But it was not possible to involve a great number of the more than 300 LAGs. In June 2016 18 founding members transformed the informal network into a **formal network and an office with 2 employees was established.**

Characteristics/Financial features

In the first 2 years the network gets support from the Managing Authority, afterwards the members pay membership fees. It is also characteristic, that every single province should delegate a LAG-manager, which is the voice of his/her province. **Members have to pay a fee of EUR 300 per year.** Right now about the **half of the LAGs are members in the LEADER Network** that is called BAGLAG.

Main activities

Beside the activities as a **lobbyist for the LEADER approach**, the German network is also involved in the **organisation and execution of different events on national level.** The events are based in information exchange between the managements and LEADER-based topics on national level.

Lessons learned

Also a big country needs a network to have a common voice on international level. A formal network is needed for that although it is not possible to get all the LAGs as members.

Estonian LEADER Network - Estonian LEADER Union

History/Background

LEADER programme implementation started in Estonia in 2006. In 2010 all Estonian LAGs (26) formed Estonian LEADER Forum as informal LEADER network, which also joined with ELARD in 2011. In 2013 about half of the LAGs decided to establish formal LEADER Network – **Estonian LEADER Union.** Estonian LEADER Union is NGO. The joining process of Estonian LAGs with the Union is still running. At the moment in 2018 21 LAGs out of 26 are members of the Union. Only LAGs are members of Estonian LEADER Union.

Characteristics/Financial features

Estonian LEADER Union has its' General Assembly which consists of representatives of LAGs (one representative per LAG, nominated by LAG, doesn't matter LAG manager, chairman or someone else). **Main income is coming from membership fees, which calculated according to the budget of LAG.** Bigger LAGs pay more than small LAGs. Membership fee varies in a quite large extent – from EUR 1500 – 4500 per LAG per year. Some additional income is coming from different projects that Estonian LEADER Union is applying from various Funds. For ELARD presidency Estonian LEADER Union received financial support also from Ministry of Rural Affairs and National Rural Network. Estonian LEADER Union has **1 full time employee since 2014**, the rest of the work is carried out on voluntary bases by working groups or with the aid of project funding. Estonian LEADER Union has formed **6 working groups out of its' members to deal with different topics** as legislation issues, internal and external communication, LEADER/CLLD policy-making, expansion of Union, etc.

Main activities

Estonian Leader Union activities that have had remarkable influence on LEADER policy making

and legislation:

1. Monitoring committee under the Ministry of Agriculture assessing 2007-2013 ERDP implementation and working out the National Rural Development Plan 2014-2020 and new Leader regulation;
2. Working group of Estonian Regional Development Strategy;
3. Representation at ELARD since 2011, ELARD Estonian presidency 2016-2017;
4. Representation at European Rural Networks Assembly;
5. Substitute member of European Economic and Social Committee;
6. Initiator and leader of CLLD multi-fund working group in Estonia involving all LEADER actors and partner associations (social partners, different ministries, etc).

In addition Estonian LEADER Union main activities are related to collect information and problems from LAGs related to LEADER implementation and then negotiate and find solutions with Managing Authority and Paying Agency. **Capacity building, training and networking of LAGs are also priority activities** of Estonian LEADER Union.

Lessons learned

The biggest organizational difficulty has been to include all LAGs as members of LEADER Union. This needs continuous involvement and capacity building activities to arise the awareness and build trust. External communication has been also challenge - to find good partnership with farmers and fisheries LAGs and different ministries. Establishment of different working groups has been very useful and all members feel that they can contribute and be involved in Union activities and the output of these working groups has been very valuable for negotiations and policy work.

Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia

History/Background

The initial push for implementation of the LEADER approach started with the activities implemented by Rural Development Network of The Republic of Macedonia (RDN of RM). **RDN of RM was established in March 2010 in Skopje, as a movement organized at national level to provide a voice for rural communities in the Republic of Macedonia.** Establishing of RDN of RM was a clear and constructive idea, based on a solid human and knowledge grounds that have been created through the implementation of the **LEADER-like activities supported by different donors from 2009 to 2012.** The process was additionally supported from 2012 to 2014 through the work of the USAID's Small Business Expansion Project. The action continued with the implementation of informative and educational workshops with the rural population in more than half of the entire rural territory of Macedonia. Once sufficient interest in LEADER was created, the key stakeholders from the public, private and civic sectors in different regions were identified and trained on the principles and mechanisms of the LEADER Approach, in preparation for the formation LAGs. These groups of key local

stakeholders, who would later be formalized into LAGs, were also guided in the process of drafting LDS (local development strategy). RDN worked with LAG constituents (rural communities, business and NGO sector) on simulating the LEADER Approach methodology and implementing small-scale rural development projects. **Currently there are 16 Local Action Groups collectively covering 73% of the entire rural territory of Macedonia.**

Characteristics/Financial features

The funding for LEADER, current Local Action Groups and Local Development Strategies has been **symbolically funded by the RDN of RM through donor-funded projects to date in Macedonia.** In some cases this has been supplemented by funding from targeted Municipalities, who have provided local office space and support facilities for the LAGs. The funding has predominantly been used to **cover the costs of training and facilitation of local groups and the costs associated with the analysis of the local area needs and the development of local development strategies.** In addition, in some areas, examples of small pilot projects have been funded (approx. €3,000-5,000) to **demonstrate the effectiveness of community-based initiatives.** This support has encouraged greater involvement of stakeholders in these regions and has raised expectations for future funding possibilities for larger priority projects to be funded through the national LEADER measure. The policy measures on supporting activities related to LEADER are prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Water Economy MAFWE. However, funding from MAFWE for supporting LAG initiatives will become available in 2018 through the national rural development program.

Main activities

The Rural Development Network of The Republic of Macedonia is the main actor for promotion and support of the LEADER activities in Macedonia.

- Involved in preparation of the guidelines for registration of LAGs and preparation of LDS.
- Member of the IPARD monitoring committee.
- Supporting MAFWE to develop the dynamics of the program for supporting the LAGs in 2018.
- At local level RDN of RM is building social and human capital in rural areas through consultations, education, training and piloting local rural economic development projects by using the bottom-up approach.

Lessons learned

RDN of RM has 3 LAG members. One of the challenges of RDN of RM will be to encourage other LAGs to become members of RDN. This process is ongoing and has a positive feedback.

Main recommendations for forming the Georgian LEADER network GALAG

According to the experience of different LEADER and rural development networks across Europe (inside EU and outside) and taking into account Georgian circumstances the following conclusions and recommendations can be done:

1. It is important to establish formal Association as LAGs' network. It gives more power to be equal partner in negotiations for rural development policy at local, regional and national level. It also creates basis of sustainable and transparent management of the finances.
2. The connection with hands-on experience is essential and therefore it is recommended to include into network at least 50% of LAG managers or/and LAG chairmen as representatives of LAGs;
3. For financial sustainability it is important to consider wider platform of actions for Georgian LEADER Network GALAG in order also to attract funding from various sources;
4. Continuous involvement and participation of representative members is needed in order to keep organization smoothly running. Building working groups among members to work with important issues (policy, communication, internal issues, training, etc) is recommended;
5. Capacity building actions for representative members, but also for other stakeholders and people related to LAGs. For these activities it is good also to apply some donor funding;
6. Networking with umbrella organizations, networks at national level and governmental institutions, ministries is important. To be stronger in policy work and lobbying it is needed to build different partnerships and create common ground with national rural development actors.
7. In order to increase international capacity and knowledge exchange with other European countries and EU level organizations it is important to build connections with European umbrella organizations, networks as European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD), LINC network, European Rural Parliament partners - Partnership for Rural Europe (PREPARE) and European Rural Communities Alliance (ERCA), European Network for Rural Development (ENRD). Building relations is needed also for Georgian LAGs for finding partners for international cooperation projects.

3. PROPOSALS TO ESTABLISH AND DEVELOP GALAG NETWORK IN GEORGIA

Based on analysis of LEADER networks across Europe and their main experiences in this chapter we would like to give suggestions how GALAG can position itself in the rural development and policy work landscape in cooperation with other actors and what kind of responsibilities and actions can support GALAG to achieve its main aim.

3.1 Main aim, responsibilities and activities of GALAG

The main aim to establish the GALAG is to **support rural development in Georgia using LEADER methodology (bottom-up approach) and to defend the interests of rural stakeholders and LAGs**. LEADER methodology, which bases on the key principles as bottom-up approach, partnership across sectors, networking, cooperation, innovation, area-based and decentralized approach creates possibilities to enhance people participation and responsibility in the rural development and decision-making at local level. The initiatives to introduce and implement LEADER methodology in Georgia have started just recently and the approach is still fairly new and novel for majority of rural development stakeholders. Therefore it is very important in GALAG work to promote and disseminate LEADER methodology implementation in Georgia.

Responsibility areas of GALAG

In chapter 2 (table 2) the LEADER implementation partners in EU countries were described on local, national and European level. It is important for GALAG also to **make a mapping of important partners and target groups on all levels**.

Although GALAG's **main visible role is to work on national level** the GALAG has a lot of functions on local level/LAG level and some work needs to be done also on international level.

On national level there are different rural development actors and supportive organizations. In Georgia, the co-operational network of rural development actors are still being developed and it is also important to pay attention to find possibilities for cooperation between these partners and avoid duplication of functions.

In EU countries there are National Rural Networks (governmental sub institutions) who are as national support units for LEADER implementation. Their responsibility is usually capacity building activities, networking between LAGs, dissemination of LEADER implementation (including success stories), organization of events, conferences, etc. In Georgia there is no such National Rural Network and then these kinds of activities could be done by GALAG. If Georgia will establish this kind of National Rural Network or any other support unit for LAGs, then it is needed to overlook all GALAG responsibilities and share the work with this support unit. It is important that the division of the functions between GALAG and perspective

National Rural Network is going to be done in participatory way whereas all counterparts (incl. GALAG and LAGs) are going to be actively involved into this process, otherwise the effectiveness of both entities can be compromised.

Then GALAG can concentrate more on policy work, lobbying, developing relations on national and international level, implementing projects, etc. Also research will still remain as important function of GALAG, because it is needed to collect very specific information from local level, analyse the information and build argumentation for improvements in legislation and for further policy work. GALAG main responsibilities on different levels are presented in table 3 below.

GALAG MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES ON LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL				
GALAG main responsibilities on local level/LAG level				
Promotion and dissemination of LEADER methodology, including success stories	Capacity building and networking of LAGs (trainings in various topics, aspects; e.g. participatory involvement skills, legislative issues, etc.)	Communication and sharing information to LAGs related to the rural policy, GALAG activities on national and international level, etc.	Research – collecting data from LAGs, analysis and building argumentation for policy work on national level	Contributing to inter-territorial cooperation between LAGs on joint topics from various funds
GALAG main responsibilities on national level				
Promotion and dissemination of LEADER methodology, including success stories, organizing event, conferences for all rural actors	Advocacy and lobbying, including also building a strong network with other national rural actors and governmental bodies	Contributing to rural development policy and legislation design. Participation in different national working groups and committees	Implementing different projects and finding various funds	GALAG members capacity building and training on specific topics
GALAG main responsibilities on international level				
Participation in ELARD European LEADER Network	Exchange contacts and support LAGs in finding partners for international cooperation		Applying and implementing international projects together with various international partners	

Table 3. GALAG main responsibilities on local, national and international level

Main activities of GALAG

Our proposals for GALAG establishment and development mainly concentrate on operational and organizational activities. We believe that in this early stage of the GALAG development these issues are the first ones to get the organization up and running. Additionally, we believe that strategic and value-based activities are going to be more and more important for the GALAG at the later stages and can be handled together with GALAG members during training program.

To achieve its' aims, GALAG's main institutional resources at the beginning of the development cycle are following:

- 8 LAGs and their members;
- GALAG members – two voluntarily acting representatives from each LAG from Georgia;
- GALAG Coordinator;
- ENPARD partners (including Mercy Corps, ELARD) and other rural development institutions involved into information exchange and learning.

GALAG main activities can be divided into **internal** („capacity building“) and an **external** („lobbying“) perspective. Internal means that the network should provide trainings and events for exchanging *Know-How* between different LAGs in Georgia. External means lobbying and communication with government, ministries, rural networks and other rural actors mainly on national level and communication activities to promote the LEADER approach and its values and success. Examples of possible internal and external activities are described in Table 4 and 5 below.

EXAMPLES OF GALAG INTERNAL ACTIVITIES	
GALAG RESPONSIBILITY AREA	INTERNAL ACTIVITIES
Capacity building and networking of LAGs (trainings in various topics, aspects; e.g. participatory involvement skills, legislative issues, etc)	<p>Capacity building is important for LAGs (managers, board members, office teams, etc) and also specific trainings for GALAG members. Long-term training programmes (about 6 months up to one year) are useful; it gives possibility to handle different topics. First it is important to identify training needs among LAGs and in addition GALAG members.</p> <p>For LAGs important topics are LEADER principles implementation, LDS implementation and monitoring, involvement of stakeholders, communication, cooperation innovation, resources management, etc. Sharing good ideas and solutions for common problems, organizing “round tables” on specific topics for LAG-members, bringing new knowledge to the system (inviting people from abroad, benchmarking topics of common interest, etc.).</p> <p>Study tours between LAGs in Georgia and abroad could be very efficient for experience exchange.</p> <p>For GALAG members important topics are policy design, simple research techniques, negotiations, communication on different levels and with media, GALAG organizational issues, finances management, LEADER in EU, etc.</p>

<p>Communication and sharing information to LAGs related to the rural policy, GALAG activities on national and international level, etc.</p>	<p>Communicate, disseminate and raise awareness of rural, territorial policies, information exchange about GALAG activities on national and international level, but also other rural actors activities, which are important and relevant.</p> <p>For better communication GALAG website should be established with all necessary information, including LAGs joint calendar.</p> <p>For better communication between LAGs there could be Skype or Zoom meeting every month to exchange experience and discuss about problematic issues</p> <p>Information exchange is very important and it creates trust between members. GALAG needs to put together its own communication plan including internal and external communication and information exchange.</p> <p><i>See example of Estonian Leader Union’s development program in Page 23.</i></p>
<p>Research – collecting data from LAGs, analysis and building argumentation for policy work on national level</p>	<p>Information collection from LAGs about bottlenecks and needs in rural development</p> <p>Simple Google questionnaires are used widely for that.</p> <p>GALAG can prepare also surveys to simplify LDS implementation and LAGs operations collecting different practices and late sharing them between LAGs.</p>
<p>Contributing to inter-territorial cooperation between LAGs on joint topics from various funds</p>	<p>In order to reach to the better results, it is quite often important to work together with issues where you can find common interest.</p> <p>GALAG can help LAGs to organize joint meetings and identify common interests. There are very good practices in EU countries where several LAGs in the same country work together with topics like tourism, local food, youth work, regional marketing, etc.</p> <p>Collaboration creates synergy and it is possible to achieve better results and get higher attention also on national level. These could be good possibility also to apply project funding from various funds for common topics.</p>
<p>Implementing different projects (also international) and finding various funds</p>	<p>This is great possibility to enhance GALAG activities and apply additional resources for projects to support important common topics for LAGs;</p> <p>projects which are good for LEADER promotion (LEADER branding, promotional material, events);</p> <p>projects to support GALAG as an organization (different capacity building trainings for GALAG members, etc).</p> <p>All these different types of projects can be national but also include international component and/or be part of international project.</p> <p>It is important to follow that GALAG projects are not something, which is not directly related to GALAG everyday work; otherwise it will be additional administrative burden.</p>

Table 4. Examples of GALAG internal activities

EXAMPLES OF GALAG EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

GALAG RESPONSIBILITY AREA	EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES
<p>Promotion and dissemination of LEADER methodology, including success stories, organizing event, conferences for all rural actors</p>	<p>GALAG communication plan should include promotion of LEADER and exactly how it is possible to do it. It is important to establish GALAG website with special attention to LEADER promotion, e.g. LAGs projects database and web-book of success stories.</p> <p>To enhance awareness it is useful to organize award competition of LAG projects in different categories like innovation, cooperation, etc to make achievements visible.</p> <p>Organization of LEADER events – festivals, conferences, etc.</p> <p>Building cooperation with press, articles in magazines, etc. LEADER branding on all levels.</p>
<p>Advocacy and lobbying, including also building a strong network with other national rural actors and governmental bodies</p>	<p>Advocacy and lobbying starts with mapping of cooperation partners on national and European level and working out GALAG main messages, declarations to promote. It is always useful and gives more power to GALAG messages if there are supporting partners.</p> <p>On local, regional level it is very important to achieve good collaboration with local municipalities and regional government; umbrella organizations (tourism association, farmers union, regional development centres, etc). As GALAG resources are limited then local level advocacy should be mainly done by LAGs.</p> <p>On national level GALAG need to cooperate with non-governmental umbrella institutions and governmental institutions (Parliament, Ministries and their units).</p> <p>On EU level GALAG should join ELARD and receive benefits of this network on international level.</p>
<p>Contributing to rural development policy and legislation design. Participation in different national working groups and committees</p>	<p>Again it is important first to make mapping of different working groups under ministries or any other institution who contributes to the policy design and try to get involved.</p> <p>Usually it is also relevant to cooperate with universities and participate in different surveys.</p>
<p>Participation in ELARD European LEADER Network</p>	<p>Participation in ELARD enables access to European information flow related to LEADER and LEADER Networks across Europe. Currently ELARD has 25 countries represented inside network.</p> <p>ELARD has access also to European Commission working groups and actively participates in dialogue with European Parliament members, European Economic and Social Committee, Committee of Regions, European Rural Parliament, European Countryside Movement, etc.</p> <p>GALAG will have possibility to receive all necessary information and also to communicate Georgian issues to ELARD.</p>
<p>Exchange contacts and support LAGs in finding partners for international cooperation</p>	<p>GALAG role is to enable international networking for Georgian LAGs and if necessary find partners for different international projects.</p> <p>For this kind of networking GALAG can easily use ELARD members network and LINC annual LEADER event.</p> <p>But there are also other possibilities and LEADER networking and cooperation events, conferences that GALAG can attend for partner search.</p>

Table 5. Examples of GALAG external activities

In order to conclude this sub-chapter it can be said that there are a lot of needs and possibilities to develop GALAG as a strong organization and expand its' activities platform. There is always a lot of work to do and challenges to overcome. Therefore it is very important for GALAG to make a choice of priorities in order to concentrate on the most important issues. Priorities with proportions of different strategic responsibility areas, realistic action plan, its' resources and time scale is needed to set up after GALAG has been established.

EXAMPLE:

Estonian Leader Union's team building program

In 2016 and 2017 Estonian Leader Union conducted a one year team-building program to enhance its co-operational and communication capabilities. As a part of the program 5 development days were arranged for the members, the development days were facilitated by communication experts and coaches

Additionally thematic reflection and coaching sessions were held for the board of the union and the for the manager of the union. As a result of the program communication plan of the organization was co-created in co-operation of communication specialists and Estonian Leader Union members.

Additionally the communication commission was formed within the organization. The commission's task is to ensure the sustainability of the program by implementation of the co-created communication plan.

The total budget of the program was 12 500 euros – union itself contributed 1500 euros from its own budget, additional 11 000 euros for successfully applied from Estonian National Foundation of Civil Society.

3.2 Structure of GALAG, its organizational format and documentation

It is important to keep things as simple as possible and not to overload the new organization with unnecessary administration and hierarchy. Therefore it is recommended to keep the structure of GALAG and roles of different units as simple as possible. The following structure of the GALAG is proposed, based on the lessons learned in the previous chapters and based on the requirement profile. Special roles of GALAG members and structural units have to be discussed and described in the documentation of the GALAG. Defining roles of different units it is important to be as clear and simple as possible and avoid overlapping.

Basis facts:

Number of LAGs (or with LEADER dealing organisations) in GALAG: 8, each LAG nominates 2 representative persons for GALAG.

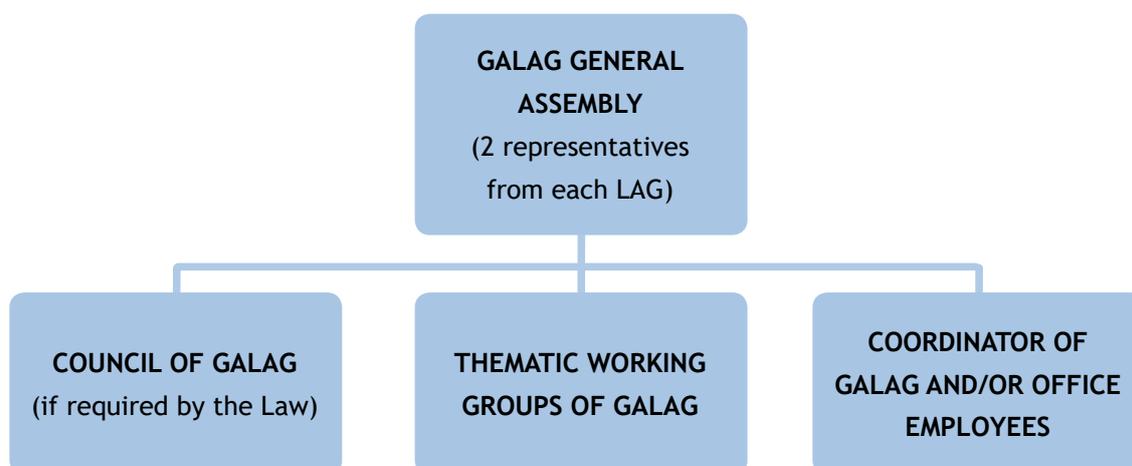


Diagram 3. Proposed structure of GALAG

The GALAG should be a legal entity. In most of the LEADER-networks within the European Union the legal form is an association. It eases the initiation and implementation of the co-operation between LEADER-networks, especially when it comes to joint projects with external funding. According to the law in Georgia it can also be an association or another legal entity, which is relevant. The GALAG is a voluntary based association.

As the GALAG is an association all the necessary legal requirements must be described, responsibilities have to be assigned to members and operational processes have to be prepared. This includes finding answers to the questions:

- Which types of members are required to build up a legal association (chairman, treasurer, etc.); how are people elected into these positions;
- What kinds of official meetings are required (e.g. General Assembly once a year,..), what kinds of formal requirements do these meetings have;
- How are financial issues dealt with (bank account, accountancy...).

Besides these rather bureaucratic questions, each role in the “system” of GALAG has to be defined for itself and in comparison to each other role.

- **Coordinator:** is the Coordinator kind of a CEO with a bundle of freedom and rights or is he/she more a “secretary” who closely works to the orders of the Council, working groups?
- **Chairman/-woman:** what are his/her rights and obligations?
- **GALAG representatives:** what are their roles in the GALAG association? How do they act towards the “outside world”? What are their roles as GALAG representatives in their own LAG - in terms of how should they transfer the common values and aims of GALAG into their own LAG?

All these questions should find answers during GALAG establishment process.

GALAG General Assembly

GALAG General Assembly consists of all GALAG members **altogether 16 representatives** (with the perspective to expand if additional LAG's will be established in Georgia). It is recommended that all LAG managers are involved into GALAG members; it means that **8 out of 16 members are LAG managers**. This is common practice in EU countries that LAG managers are directly involved in LEADER Network. It assures hands-on practical experience usage.

In order to be effective and fully accomplish GALAG's goals and carry out its activities we recommend following aspects to consider for the LAG's while selecting and nominating their representatives into GALAG.

First and foremost, it is important to ensure the diversity of the GALAG members. If the 16 GALAG members will have **different background characteristics, it'll give a possibility to combine several competences, perspectives and experiences to enable GALAG to operate effectively**. Therefore all LAG's are encouraged to contribute into this principle by nominating GALAG members with **different gender, age, educational/professional background and competences/interests**.

Some of the key competences necessary for the GALAG to act as effective and successful LAG-network are following:

- sufficient knowledge about LEADER/CLLD principles and implementation;
- understanding/experience in negotiations and lobbying, verbal and written communication skills to disseminate GALAG's work and to communicate with partners (national level with ministries, social partners, other organizations) and stakeholders;
- good understanding of Georgian rural development stakeholders and related governance structures and legislation (in order to be able to take part on policy making processes and rural development legislation design);
- economical thinking, understanding/interest related fund raising in order to strengthen GALAG financial capacity and independence;
- visionary mindset and ability to see bigger picture and promote/work out innovative solutions;
- facilitation skills for practical management of GALAG events/co-operation with partners and enable trainings for GALAG members.

Additionally, it is important that the nominated GALAG members will be motivated and dedicated to contribute into GALAG's work. Based on our experiences, a **GALAG member should be able to invest around 3-4 hours per week (average) from his/her time** into GALAG-related tasks and activities. Since GALAG perspective roles and activities are to have an international dimension, it is suggested that at least one representative from every LAG is able to communicate in English.

GALAG Council

In European LEADER Networks it is quite common practice that **Association has also Council**. Council is elected by General Assembly and it has operational power of the organization. It is also usually requirement from association legislation in EU Member States. GALAG Assembly should decide according to Georgian legislation is there a need to establish the Council. In Georgian case there are only 16 members of GALAG and there is maybe not very necessary to have separate structural unit. But if the Law requires this then this structural unit has to be established and Council members needs to be elected by Assembly.

GALAG thematic working groups

In order to operate GALAG and its resources, competences effectively and to contribute to specific topics quickly if this is needed it is recommended to **establish working groups**, who propose specific content to Assembly and Coordinator of GALAG. Assembly needs to decide what kind and how many working groups are needed to establish.

These working groups can be following:

- Communication and LEADER promotion working group;
- Lobbying and advocacy working group;
- Research and legislative issues working group;
- Capacity building of LAGs and GALAG members working group;
- Financial capacity building working group;
- International relations working group;
- GALAG organizational processes and GALAG further development working group;
- Etc.

GALAG Coordinator

As the number of LAGs and the coordination between them is manageable with the representatives and a coordinator, it is not needed, that additional employed staff and GALAG separate office are set up in the initial stage of the establishment of GALAG. If the requirements and/or number of LAGs is growing, own staff and office could be set up, but right at the beginning we don't see it is necessary as other LEADER networks in EU have much more LAGs and they are also quite often based on voluntary work without permanent employed staff.

A Coordinator, who is not a representative of a LAG, should do the coordination and organisational activities of the GALAG. This coordinator is responsible for the management of the GALAG and the implementation of GALAG annual activities plan as well as information exchange and dissemination activities.

This Coordinator has – at the beginning – an office in Tbilisi at the Mercy Corps office. It is necessary, that there are enough financial resources for the Coordinator. The financial resources can come from LAGs, donors, project funds, governmental aid, etc - the details of the financial capacity are the content of the next subchapter.

Documentation of GALAG

GALAG as an association has **its Statutes**, which is the main document of the organization and where all important aspects are described as aim of the association and its main activities, structural units of the association, regulation of meetings of the Assembly and the Council, voting rights, expansion and exclusion of members, etc.

Additionally to the Statutes organization can compile **other internal rules and documentation** that can simplify the understanding of the work and processes of the GALAG. Although we recommend keeping things as simple as possible then sometimes it is needed to make written agreements, where common opinion is described.

For example there can be following internal documentation:

- Good will agreement – how do we work together, which are our values we follow;
- Nomination of GALAG members;
- Order to regulate the Council work and election;
- Order to regulate the thematic working groups work and its members;
- Etc.

3.3 Financial capacity building of GALAG

Building financial capacity and sustainability is one of the most important and complex task of GALAG. It is very good that for establishment and coordination it is possible to use ENPARD project funding for first years. Before the project is over GALAG needs to build its financial sustainability and define budget resources and possible allocations for different relevant budget lines. There are several possibilities for that.

Main sources that European LEADER networks are using are:

- **Membership fees paid by LAGs, other members** – Most of European LEADER networks, a system of fees have established for the maintenance of the structure of the network, which, beyond resolving the financial situation, is based on the commitment of the members. Such fees, unfortunately, do not usually cover all necessary expenses related to the association and very often additional fundraising plan is necessary.
- **Public funding** – State aid from technical assistance budget. Some European LEADER networks sign an annual agreement with their Ministry of Agriculture or others, to carry out actions that, in particular, the ministry itself cannot address. Typically these are tasks of a „general public interest“ such as sharing good practices, communicating the LEADER-approach, etc. Sometimes the economic dimensions are high, and sometimes there are low. Those agreements give financial security that allows movement forward and operations to continue. REDR (Spanish network) is an example of public funding from different Ministries, on that way it helps to keep the network structure in times when LAGs are in transition period or they have financial problems to pay their fees. Getting support from governmental institution it has to be secured that LEADER network remains independent. For example The Austrian NSU is an example for that:

Austria's largest umbrella organisation for environmental NGOs is part of the NRN network support unit (contracting entity: Ministry for Agriculture and Environment) but at the same time they are an active lobbying organisation for environmental protection negotiating and arguing with the Ministry for Agriculture and Environment.

- **Various project funding** while implementing different LEADER network projects – this source is quite widely used by European LEADER networks, especially for capacity building of the LEADER network and LAGs, national, international projects in various topics.
- **Selling services** – providing different services like consultancy, organizing events, trainings for LAGs and other partners, clients, etc. – this option is used by some LEADER Networks, but most of LEADER Networks are not selling their services because it requires a lot of time and additional human resources.

The dynamic of budget needs to be discussed and decided by GALAG, which direction is reasonable to take and what kind of proportions from different sources could be realistic to achieve for GALAG. Please see also financial features of LEADER Networks across Europe in chapter 2. There is description of main strengths and weaknesses of different alternatives below.

OPTIONS FOR DIFFERENT BUDGET SOURCES				
	Membership fees	Public funding (State aid)	Various project funding	Selling services
Strengths	This source is easy to handle for GALAG, secured finances every year, helps to keep financial sustainability	It is very good and easy source if there is political will to support GALAG.	Possibility to increase the financial capacity and GALAG independence significantly.	Gives independence to GALAG to develop its own capacity and competences. To be competence centre. Choosing this direction GALAG can develop very clear economic capacity.
Weaknesses	If this fee is not eligible for LAGs then it is difficult to find resources at LAG level, it needs always justification at LAG level; there is always question how much is fair to pay and which are the good characteristics for the fee for different LAGs. It can slow down LAGs joining process with GALAG.	It can threaten GALAG independence; political will can change; every year it is needed to apply from State budget and there is always possibility not to receive this funding – especially in certain amount.	It needs a lot of work to apply and implement these projects. GALAG activities will depend on Donors targets.	It needs a lot of everyday work, there should be special staff for providing these services. The focus can move away from GALAG main functions.

Table 6. Options for different budget sources

„The truth might lie somewhere in the middle“

The decision for a suitable type of financing model for GALAG could include mixture of different sources. **It also depends on the relative weight of priorities and responsibility areas that GALAG decides to choose for its activities.** Having diverse funding model the financial risks are scattered.

If the **external (“lobbying”) activities are predominant** and the maximum independence is important to achieve then the preferred financial solution could be more related to attract project funding from various donors and develop its own services.

If there is **equilibrium between internal (“capacity building”) and external (“lobbying”)** then there will be a greater chance to take advantage of public funding having the opportunity to settle and establish the GALAG as a player in rural development.

Focussing on internal (“capacity building”) activities like trainings, networking, events, etc. has the advantage, that LAGs directly benefit from GALAG activities and then they are probably more ready to pay higher membership fees.

First it is very important to make a **mapping of possible funding sources** (projects, public funding, donors, membership fees, etc). There could be also possibility to find help from advisory centers; sometimes these centers give advices without charge. There is also possibility **to build network of partners and participate in partners’ projects as one project partner.** In this case being rather co-applicant than the leading partners there is possibility to reduce GALAG work load but still be the beneficiary and get significant support. The cooperation network is needed to establish.

3.4 Organizational capability, training and capacity building of GALAG members

Network management is different from just managing an organization. Instead of hierarchical mechanisms patterns of commitment and agreements based on mutual benefits, trust and values have to be established and managed. This requires special competencies from GALAG representatives and the Coordinator.

As a first step to identify the development needs of GALAG, the baseline capacity assessment of the organisation should be performed shortly after establishment of GALAG. Combination of member’s survey and participatory self-evaluation can be used for that purpose. As a result GALAG itself and ELARD (who is about to provide external support for raising GALAG’s capacities) will have an overview about the existing resources and main development needs to focus on during the capacity building program.

The topics related to be touched during the trainings and capacity building events to be conducted for and by GALAG could be following:

- Rural development policy and strategy awareness training;
- Training in LEADER and Community-Led Local Development in practice;
- Involvement and participatory leadership trainings:
- The relationship between strategy, partnership and area;
- Training in analytical and critical thinking skills;
- Training on implementation of the Local Development Strategy;
- Training on effective communication;
- Fundraising, project proposal writing training course;
- Inter-territorial and transnational cooperation;
- Social inclusion in LEADER/CLLD;
- Etc.

Please see also topics for capacity building for LAGs and GALAG representative members in Table 4.

There is a need for continuous monitoring of GALAG's and its members' needs and expectations towards the training/capacity building activities. It is suggested that an annual plan is being discussed and agreed by GALAG in parallel of budget preparation.

It is important the sustainability of the all training/capacity building activities is ensured - feedback collected from the participants, follow-up activities agreed and implemented and impact of the activities evaluated. This is especially important when it comes to involving external knowledge and arranging study trips. This kind of activities should be well adjusted to practical needs of GALAG, pre-meetings and follow-up meetings are good ways to raise the effectiveness of the study visits to discuss the expectations towards the visits and to agree how the experiences of the visits will be implemented and what kind of follow up activities are to be executed.

GALAG's capacity building/training activities do not have to be limited with LAGs and GALAG's members only - it suggested to arrange co-operational events with other partners and rural stakeholders to contribute into the effective and functional networking.

3.5 Reduction of risks and change management within GALAG

As LEADER Networks in Europe as well as GALAG are influenced by different risk factors then it is always good to think through possible threats and activities how it is possible to overcome

these factors. Following scheme is provided to analyse both external and internal risks. Risks depends also a lot on priorities, responsibility areas and activities chosen by GALAG. Therefore it is important while choosing the proportions of GALAG priorities and actions then risks are also needed to be evaluated choosing between alternatives. Risk analysis is good opportunity to speak about problems and find possibilities how to solve these problems together. It increases **GALAG sustainability and ability to overcome with challenges.**

RISK ANALYSIS				
Description	Realization potential	Impact	Preventive activities	Mitigative/corrective activities
INTERNAL RISKS				
1. Conflict phase - lack of common understanding between GALAG members, conflict of interests;	Hugh	High	Active conflict management, defining common values, team-building trainings, etc.	Continuous capacity building; meetings; trust building.
2. Lack of budget for GALAG activities;	High	Medium	Finding additional resources from various Funds.	Continuous finances management, reduction of activities and budget
3. ...				
EXTERNAL RISKS				
POLITICAL FACTORS				
1. Changes in rural development and LEADER politics	Medium	Strong	Ongoing co-operation with LAGs and partners to be informed and negotiate with Ministry.	Continuous information exchange, GALAG policy work strategy revision.
2. ...				
ECONOMIC FACTORS				
1. Negative answers form Donors	High	Medium	Improvement of project proposals.	Building partners network to apply together, building relations with various Donors. Finding other Donors.
2. ...				
PARTNERSHIP FACTORS				
1. Difficulties to build relationship with Farmers association	Medium	Medium	Special meeting to find common interests.	Information exchange, participation in meetings
2. ...				
COMMUNICATION FACTORS				
1. Lack of knowledge of LEADER and LAGs, bottom-up development	High	High	LEADER campaign.	Continuous branding of LEADER and LAGs, presentation of success stories.
2. ...				

Table 7. Risk analysis

3.6. Communication and cooperation

In chapter 2 European LEADER Networks main partners on local, national and international level were described. Similar overview about potential Georgian LEADER actors and cooperation partners are described in the following table 9. It is important for GALAG to make a mapping of the important partners and define main activities towards them.

LEADER ACTORS AND POTENTIAL COOPERATION PARTNERS FOR GALAG					
Local level	Local Action Groups (LAGs) with their different stakeholders (communities, local municipalities, businesses, cooperation partners)				
National and/or regional level	GALAG, Georgian LEADER Network	Managing Authority (usually Ministry of Agriculture, other relevant Ministries)	National Parliament and its commissions	National level cooperation partners, umbrella organization, networks	Donors and development aid organizations
	Thematic working groups	Monitoring Committee, different working groups, commissions (e.g. Agricultural committee, etc).	Different working groups, commissions (e.g. Rural development, agriculture, environment, etc).	Farmers, Tourism Association, Fisheries Unions, Village Movement Associations, etc.	Their offices in Georgia.
European level	European LEADER Association (ELARD); European Rural Network (ENRD)				

Table 8. LEADER actors and potential cooperation partners for GALAG

Main internal (inside GALAG network) and external (with national and international partners) activities are described in Chapter 3.1. Please see tables 4, 5.

Networking and communication with LAGs and their stakeholders on local level and with national and international partners have many benefits:

- Rising awareness of LEADER and LAGs;
- Better chances to influence rural policy in Georgia;
- Promotion of good practice;
- Increasing possibilities for LEADER branding;
- Positive legislative changes;
- Feed and generate synergies of different partners;
- Find cooperation partners to participate in different Calls of Funding;
- Attract different Donors and project funding;
- Etc.

4. CONCLUSIVE REMARKS AND SUGGESTIONS

In all written theory about public-private partnerships and also in practice we can find that **the building of trust between partners is fundamental**. Trust is not something that just simply exists. There is a need for conscious attempts to build trust inside the network. **It means continuous dialogue and involvement of all members inside GALAG**. It can be also said that if we are **strong inside then we can be also strong outside**. As GALAG needs to have a successful work on national level and overcome with external challenges then to achieve the internal strength should be the first priority of GALAG at the beginning.

LEADER has been a very successful method throughout 26 years in the EU and the only method that enables to bring the **decision-making about EU finances to the very local level and develop rural areas in a bottom-up way**. LEADER networks role is to pull others along, involve LAGs inside country and build bridges between LAGs across Europe and with national and international partners with the aim to **strengthen rural areas with LEADER methodology implementation and bring new solutions and new knowledge into LAG areas**.

In this programming period **the LEADER approach has been reinforced and Community-led-Local-Development tool has been introduced** in EU. CLLD like LEADER is an **integrated local development tool**, which influences a wide spectrum of activities and has a major impact on **local economies and social inclusion**.

Although Georgia is doing its first steps to implement LEADER methodology and maybe it is too early to speak about implementing CLLD with more broad cooperation of different stakeholders and ministries we **encourage GALAG to be ambitious, yet realistic** to already think about how Georgia can **empower integrated local development** and establish linkages on local level but also with national partners active in **regional development and social affairs**.

The involvement and capacity building of local actors is one of the biggest advantages of the LEADER/CLLD methodology. Integrated local development is the best way of building links and synergies between various stakeholders and issues in local/rural development. Building links between different types of territories (rural, urban, coastal) mean those involved can learn from each other and find answers to important challenges in a more inclusive way. **Continuous cooperation, networking and training enhance good governance**.

ELARD slogan is

***“If you want to go fast, go alone;
If you want to go far, go together!”***

This is meaningful sentence in the sense that everybody is important, it can take more time and involve additional challenges, but our achievements are higher if we make these efforts together.

We wish you a joyful and successful journey together in the GALAG!

ELARD ENPARD project team

ANNEXES:

Annex 1. Overview of LEADER-networks

Annex 2. Overview of LEADER-subgroups

Activities and competences of different LEADER Networks across Europe

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Organization	Association "Rural development network in Bosnia and Herzegovina"
Main activities	Lobbying, advocacy, granting, implementation of the projects relevant to rural development.
Number of employees	0.75

Biggest success stories of the organization, network:

- Organizing of the 1st rural parliament in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Organizing of the PREPARE gathering in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Partnership in ALTER project (EU funded), with the partners organizations from Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, Latvia and Turkey.

CROATIA

Organization	Croatian Rural Development Network
Main activities	Advocating interests of rural stakeholders in creating and implementing public policies; networking and informing our members and contributors to rural developmen; education; exchange of knowledge and experiences; organisation development.
Number of employees	2

Biggest success stories of the organization, network:

- HMRR has prepared Shadow report on IPARD implementation, which purpose was to analyze the real situation of IPARD implementation, seen throw the eyes of rural stakeholders.
- First Croatian Rural Parliament.
- Declaration of The First Croatian Rural Parliament.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Organization	NN LAG CR, National Network of Local Action Groups of the Czech Republic
Main activities	Lobbying and advocacy on national level; lobbying and advocacy on European and regional levels; training of LAGs and staff, service provider for Managing authorities and ministries – education and training of LAGs paid from ERDF Technical assistance; organizing conferences, seminars and exhibitions for National Rural Network; participation in LEADER dissemination projects (e.g. Georgia) and environmental projects.
Number of employees	6

Biggest success stories of the organization, network:

- Building up a strong network with almost 100% LAG membership, which is strong and respected partner of all ministries, MAs, PAs, national and European parliament, regional and local governments and other main stakeholder's organisations, represented in all monitoring committees and different platforms dealing with rural and regional development policies in general, not just those dealing with EU.
- Effective advocacy and lobbying for 2007-13 making, firstly, Czech Republic one of the flagships of multifund CLLD and, secondly, arranging LEADER/CLLD support for 100% LAGs covering 95% of rural areas.
- Peer to peer training program of new LAGs by experienced LAGs.
- Participation in big projects, e.g. disseminating of LEADER outside EU, environmental projects.

DENMARK	
Organization	Not final yet - but organising is in progress
Main activities	Dialogue with MA, PA and ministry
Number of employees	0
ESTONIA	
Organization	Estonian Leader Union
Main activities	LEADER Union is a non-profit organization whose main mission is to defend the rights and interests of Estonian LAG's. Our purpose is to support our members in applying LEADER principles and developing cooperation. LEADER Union was established to protect the LEADER principles from internal over-regulations
Number of employees	1
Biggest success stories of the organization, network:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful negotiations with other social partners. • Policy negotiations to increase the rate of indirect costs. 	
FINLAND	
Organization	Village Action Association of Finland
Main activities	Promoter and lobbyist of village and rural affairs; provider of training and manager of communications in issues related to village and rural affairs; SYTY is involved in active cooperation with most rural developers; SYTY supports LAGs and the regional village network by means of projects and training
Number of employees	8
Biggest success stories of the organization, network:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarding CLLD implementation in Finland and important good practice is having our own full-time Leader-agent who acts as the general officer and lobbyist for all the LAGs in Finland working actively with the LAGs and national authorities. 	
FRANCE	
Organization	LEADER France association
Main activities	Information of LAG Presidents and responsible of GAL; training of French RDP Actors: elected and LAG civil servants; common promotional and communication actions; management of a national Contact Group of LAGs charged to organize dialog and exchanges with French MA and PA; website between LAGs exchange and diffusion of information.
Number of employees	1
Biggest success stories of the organization, network:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact group. • Organization of regional meetings of LAGs. 	
GREECE	
Organization	Greek LEADER Network
Main activities	The aim of the Greek LEADER Network is the exchange of experiences and the diffusion of information and know-how through the LAG's and other rural development institutions. The Network plays substantial role in coordinating and cooperating along with the public authorities (MA and PA) the genuine and smooth implementation of LEADER in Greece.
Number of employees	Not applicable.

HUNGARY	
Organization	Hungarian National Rural Network
Main activities	Support the implementation of the Hungarian RDP, building a cooperational network of rural stakeholders, develop and enhance channels of communication through information activities, working together with the ENRD and other international organizations, operating a LEADER support unit.
Number of employees	3 in General Secretary, 18 as regional representative
IRELAND	
Organization	Irish Local Development Network
Main activities	Represent issues of concern (and solutions) to key funding Departments on programme implementation issues; promote strategic linkages with key national and EU bodies for the benefit of members, promote the exchange and development of best practice, publication of policy papers to promote member work in areas such as social economy, community development and so on; identify key research relevant to the needs of the membership.
Number of employees	2
LATVIA	
Organization	Latvian Rural Forum
Main activities	Development of NGO cooperation network; explanatory and educational activities for activating local initiatives; etrengthening LRF position in the dialog between politicians and organizations.
Number of employees	2 and hired external experts and regular experts based on activities.
Biggest success stories of the organization, network:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition for school youth "Time for rural areas" (Laiks laukiem) - participated ~4% of whole LV pupils and sent amazing videos and photo stories about what is happening in todays' countryside - laikslaukiem.lv • Tourism project - made interactive LAG map of ~250 LEADER projects both in paper in digital versions • Cooperation with Moldova • Organization of 2 rural parliaments 	
LITHUANIA	
Organization	Lithuanian rural communities union
Main activities	Implementation of rural development related projects; lobbying for better rights, laws and ect. for LAG's and rural commenities; mobilisation of rural movements, rural voice.
Number of employees	3
MACEDONIA-FYROM	
Organization	Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia
Main activities	Information dissemination to rural stakeholders regarding rural development policies and measures (periodicals, promotional materials, homepage, seminars, meeting, forum, contact points, etc.); promote cooperation of rural development operators at the cross-regional and international level; established and accessible base of rural organizations and administrations; organization of meetings and seminars, including training, information and support activities to cooperation projects between local action groups, including the application of existing instructions; data gathering and delivery on the development of rural areas and the implementation of the rural policies and measures.
Number of employees	5
Biggest success stories of the organization, network:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building of rural stakeholders by utilizing LEADER approach in Republic of Macedonia. 	

POLAND

Organization	Polska Sieć LGD - Polish Network of LAGs
Main activities	Advocacy for good legislation; organize seminars and conferences; represent Polish LAGs in Poland and in UE promoting CLLD in Poland.
Number of employees	0-1

Biggest success stories of the organization, network:

- We have changed some important regulations.
- We are the most important organization in Poland fighting for CLLD in whole country.

PORTUGAL

Organization	Minha Terra Network / Portuguese Federation of Local Development Associations
Main activities	Networking; representation of LAGs at national level: managing authorities, payment agencies and other administration; lobbying; communication; information and training.
Number of employees	4

Biggest success stories of the organization, network:

- The biggest success history is the consolidation and recognition of Minha Terra as a national network that brings together all rural LAGs and participates in several national and regional consultation bodies / forum's like the Portuguese Social and Economic Council, the monitoring committees of RDPs, an Operational Programs and the Portuguese structure United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.
- At the same time, at local level there is also a consolidation and stability of local partnerships, with a growing number of LAGs, covering all rural areas.

SERBIA

Organization	National LEADER Network NLN
Main activities	Create lasting change that lifts up entire rural communities throughout Serbia. By bringing people, organizations and resources together around innovative solutions, we affect thousands of rural lives; national Leader Network's mission is to improve rural lives and strengthen rural communities; national Leader Network is building an infrastructure that supports the growth and expansion of the field of rural social innovation and entrepreneurship, including access to IPARD II 2014-2020, VP and other financing and capital, bridges to the government, business and academic sectors, and strategic partnerships that deliver social and financial value. Also, NLN successfully working on two projects: „Sweet weekend at Devojački Bunar“ and „FairOil Serbia: Affordable Green Economy Solutions for Creation of Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Jobs for Rural Roma“.
Number of employees	No permanent staff at the moment, organization is in early fund raising and establishing phase.

Biggest success stories of the organization, network:

- One of our most important success is that we become member of IPARD Monitoring Community in Serbia. That means our State recognized us as their long-term partners.
- Our second important success in past year is our partnership within project supported by Norwegian Embassy. Project named "Institutional Support to LEADER+BK/NLN 2015/2016".
- Last but not important less is our Network of more than 600 rural organizations throughout Serbia.

SLOVAKIA

Organization	National network of Slovak LAGs
Main activities	Lobbying, information, ELARD, part of monitoring committee.
Number of employees	0.5

Biggest success stories of the organization, network:

- 100 mil. Eur for CLLD in IROP

SLOVENIA

Organization	Društvo za razvoj slovenskega podeželja / Slovenian RD network
Main activities	Acting as the social partner in the rural policy; organizing seminars and events for LAGs, organizing Rural Parliaments, education, promotion and advocacy of LEADER/CLLD.
Number of employees	2 part-time, mainly voluntary work

Biggest success stories of the organization, network:

- 3 Slovenian Rural Parliaments organized.
- Reached consensus about representation of all Slovenian LAGs.
- Active involvement in the rural policy as the respected social partner.

SPAIN

Organization	Spanish Network for Rural Development
Main activities	REDR greatly supports its Department of Communication and Media, so as to give more prominence to rural development groups and rural areas in general. www.redr.es ; weekly e-bulletin, daily news. Carry out projects, studies, activities connected to rural areas needs.
Number of employees	4

Biggest success stories of the organization, network:

- Agreement of collaboration (REDR- Ministry of Agriculture) have signed a collaboration agreement since 2009 for the support of associations in national rural development networks which belong to the European Network and are in touch with are formed by Local Action Groups and territories that follow the LEADER guidelines.
- Annual grants for conducting volunteer programs and social cooperation under the Tax allocation Income Tax of individual. Starts in 2004 until now.

SWEDEN

Organization	LUS (Lokal Utveckling Sverige) - Local Development Sweden
Main activities	Dialogue with the managing authority and paying agency which is centralized this programming period to the Swedish board of agriculture. LUS is compiling our interests towards the MA and PA; regional and national dialogue/meetings with our members; building networks online; information to and from ELARD.
Number of employees	none

Biggest success stories of the organization, network:

- Our biggest pride so far is that we have already gained the trust of 35 members out of a total of 53 possible. The MA and PA has accepted us as a dialogue partner and we are slowly starting on a path together to make the CLLD implementation as good as possible in this programming period.
- A very good way of getting information from our members on a daily basis is a closed group on facebook where strictly only members are allowed. This needs not so much interaction from our organization, since we still do not have any employees is this a good way of keeping contact without too much effort.

Existence of LEADER sub-groups in European countries

1.	Austria	<p>There are several groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group LAG representatives with ministry: 2 times a year - Group LAG representatives alone: 2 times a year - Group LAG representatives with national network: once a year <p>Thematic working groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LEADER and entrepreneurship - LEADER and social inclusion - LEADER and transnational culture - LEADER and municipal development
2.	UK (PLANED)	<p>In Wales we have a CLLD consultation group (used to be called LEADER task and finish group a couple of years ago).</p> <p>The group meets (roughly) quarterly, with members representing regional LAG networks, & FLAG, MA, Welsh Government officials, WEFO, a handful of national organisations and independent members. PLANED sits on the group as an independent LAG. The meetings provide a platform for discussions on LEADER / CLLD, and feedback to the Welsh Government.</p> <p>I'm not sure about structures in other parts of the UK.</p>
3.	Slovakia	<p>In Slovakia, there is no LEADER sub-group, nor working group, simply there is nothing. Nobody is communicating with LAGs, since there are still no LAGs and not one LAG has been contracted so far. All the managing documents are prepared by the external company Deloitte and LAGs or LEADER experts don't have any chance to put any comments or suggestions to MA.</p>

4.	Sweden	<p>We have had a group called "cooperation" group which is a working group within the NRN. Since we started our own organization LUS for Leader groups, there is no need for it anymore and there seems not to be a clear task/role for it. Members are ESF-council, Farmers organization, All Sweden shall live, Regional –Council, Head of the CLLD-unit of our MA, Environmental organization a.s.o., mainly actually organisations with a rural interest except for the ESF and regional council. They are more and more having a diminishing role and the question now is actually if we want to keep this group or not.</p> <p>We also do have "surveillance committees" to all our programmes. We have representatives in the rural programme and in the EMFF. We have our own programme for CLLD in the regional and social fund, which is actually why we do have a surveillance committee for that programme dealing only with CLLD questions. So that is actually the "leading" surveillance committee to the other ones, concerning CLLD-questions. Not formally, but informally. Funny though that this is under Regional and Social fund. This surveillance committee consists of leaderpeople plus people from MA and government.</p>
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5.	Latvia	<p>We don't have LEADER sup-group in Latvia. NRN has a group for RDP, where also LEADER/CLLD is included, but these meetings are not regular (less than once a year) and LEADER is not an important issue there.</p> <p>We, Latvian Rural Forum (LRF), similar as others explained, represent LAGs (34 from 35 LAGs in LV + all FLAGs).</p> <p>We proactively collect needs, wishes, problems, challenges from every LAG (calling or face-to-face) average once in 2 month. Of course, there are also letters in between from LAGs pointing out what is not working the way it should.</p> <p>With all of that info at least once a month we meet with PA and MA to find solutions, if needed than we also work with other stakeholders (NRN, SME Tourism Network, Regional Ministry etc.).</p> <p>It has developed during last year as a cooperation that is based on trust, so it is not just one-way story, but they (MA, PA) are deeply involved and interested. During our meetings MA and PA are explaining difficulties and challenges that they are facing, so we work to solve those issues as well.</p> <p>Last week we organized 2-days capacity building seminar for LAGs - there were around 60 participants, from which 45 representing LAGs, 10 - MA and PA, 5 - NRN, ex-ante evaluation team representative etc. These kind of seminars are not useful just because of the themes, but it is also an amazing place for trust building and better understanding through face-to-face conversations.</p> <p>Our next step is to deeply involve also other stakeholders on daily bases to make the gap between policies, documents, researches and real life smaller.</p>
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6.	Croatia	<p>The work of the NRN is being funded under measure 501 (IPARD) than under measure 20 (20.2), of RDP 2014.-2020., but it currently operates in complete contradiction to the guidelines of the European Commission laid down in Regulations (EU) 1303/2013 and 1305/2013. When it comes to implementing that work, the European Code of Conduct for Partnership within the ESI Funds, provided for in Delegated Regulation (EU) 240/2014, should apply. The NRN acts inconsistently, even as regards the mandatory provisions of the Rural Development Programme of the Republic of Croatia for the period 2014-2020 and its Rules of Procedure, issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, though in a manner that was completely non-transparent, and without consulting the public and members of the NRN.</p> <p>As stated in the Rural Development Programme of the Republic of Croatia for period 2014-2020, the current NRN membership is transferred from the IPARD programme (277 multi-sector members, including through two public calls: the first call of 8 October 2012, when 196 members joined; afterwards, the membership was expanded through a second call, open from December 2012 to May 2013, through which another 81 members joined). Since the beginning of the Rural Development Programme of the Republic of Croatia for the period 2014-2020, no public call for the renewal and expansion of membership has been made (note: at the request of the LMH, in the spring of 2016, an application form was placed on the NRN's website: http://www.mrr.hr/, after LEADER Network Croatia warning, but without any relevant information about the possibilities for membership. The website contains no list of members, so it is not possible to obtain any detailed information about the activities of the RDN, which, after its first meeting and establishment in 2013, never met again, nor were members informed of anything).</p> <p>The NRN had a Steering Committee (during IPARD), which was formed from the members at the first meeting in 2013, and the LEADER subcommittee under the IPARD programme. Quote from the NRN website (note: the text about the NRN that is still on the website:</p> <p>'...Two meetings of the Network's Steering Committee were held. At a meeting held on 18 July 2013, the Rules of Procedure of the Steering Committee were adopted, and the members of the Network's Steering Committee were informed about the Rural Development Programme for the</p>
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7.	Spain	In Spain our National Network has not created a group related to LEADER, so that we don't have neither a real LEADER Sub-group nor a permanent LEADER/CLLD group. They argue that it is not necessary neither compulsory. We have requested it on numerous occasions but without success. It is not considered a priority. Therefore, LEADER does not have a space to debate, reflect and influence at national level. In recent days General Director of Agriculture has changed and we would like to remind the new DG the importance of create that group.
8.	Estonia	In Estonia there is created a supporting unit for LEADER under Estonian Parliament.
9.	Poland	There is a LEADER Sub-group in Poland. It is a sub-group of the Working Group of NRN. Members are representatives of MA, PA and 16 Intermediary Bodies from 16 regions and 16 representatives of LAGs (regional networks of LAGs) and some other people. The Chairman is from the Polish Network of LAGs. So, Poland is a good practise. The group is very active. The fifth meeting is starting today (two-days meeting). I am not a member (sometimes a guest) but I know they work a lot (workshops). It is the important forum for LEADER/CLLD in Poland, I think. Our Vice-Minister who is responsible for LEADER was a trainer for LEADER approach.
10.	Portugal	In Portugal we don't have a real LEADER Sub-group. Like in Poland, we have a permanent LEADER/CLLD working group, chaired by the NSU of the NRN. We (MINHA TERRA) are members representing LAGs. Other members are PA, MA for the 3 PT RDP, and also MA of Regional Operational Programmes (which contribute with ESF and ERDF to CLLD); experts can be invited... we just had one meeting to make a contribution on the priority themes for a call for projects launched by MA (under NRN Measure) to LAGs capacity building. So it is not very active...

<p>11.</p>	<p>Finland</p>	<p>I am a new representative of ELARD from Finland and it took some time to confirm the situation of Finland. But we have two sub-groups: Rural policy council has a Civic network and it has as a tool a "CLLD work group". The aim of this CLLD work group is to strengthen and mainstream CLLD both nationally and internationally.</p> <p>Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has a "Leader Expert Group". It has not been officially appointed but ministry summons it together and the whole "Leader team" is represented: ministry, MA, NRN, Regional Authorities and Leader Groups. This Expert Group deals extensively with matters linked to implementation of Leader eg. training needs, the needs of guidance, criteria for the allocation of additional quotas, the challenges that have arisen in implementation, etc.</p> <p>In addition to these government related sub-committees we also have a "Leader team" in our national cooperation association, The Village Action Association of Finland.</p> <p>We have a "Leader representative" for LAGs – chosen and financed by all of the 54 Finnish LAGS. She participates in many national cross sectoral workgroups and teams, and also represents LAGs in international events too if needed. All in all I'd say we are relatively happy with the situation at the moment.</p>
<p>12.</p>	<p>Denmark</p>	<p>No, we do not have a LEADER sub-group. We have asked for this a few times – and we have referred to the benefits that could come out of such a group (the networking and sharing challenges and resolution) – but for now: no success.</p>

13.	France	<p>1) LEADER France is invited as a member of the National Rural Network Committee for the exchange of information on the occasion of the LEADER and PEI meetings. LEADER France is not directly involved in the work of the LEADER Committee. So we don't have a real LEADER Sub-group. Since 2014 we have requested the creation of a national working group or a platform on numerous occasions but without success.</p> <p>2) There is also the LEADER technical group within the Association of Regions of France, which brings together the 27 Managing Authorities. LEADER France is invited to meetings for the exchange of information but not directly involved in exchanges between managing authorities.</p>
14.	Lithuania	<p>In Lithuania we have several groups which are working for LEADER:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LEADER implementation coordination group in Ministry of Agriculture; - National rural network's LEADER coordination group (Ministry of Agriculture); - National LAG Network association (NGO which can advise).
15.	Serbia	<p>Serbia is in the process of establishing necessary structures, within Instrument for Pre-accession for Rural Development - IPARD. National Rural Development Network is still to be established, and the process haven't yet started. Within NRDN there might be LEADER sub-group, we will see.</p>
16.	Germany	<p>In Germany there is no LEADER-subgroup on national level, but there are LEADER-committees on program level and the German LAGs are represented in the EAFRD advisory board.</p>
17.	Czech Republic	<p>In the Czech Republic there is LEADER/CLLD Subgroup as a part of National Permanent Conference which is coordinating ESIF territorial dimension instruments (ITI, CLLD...). Otherwise NN LAG is represented in monitoring committees of all operational programs relevant for LEADER/CLLD and there is CLLD Platform by the Ministry of Regional Development which is coordinating ESIF funds.</p>