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ENPARD: Support to Agriculture and Rural Development

EUROPEAN LEADER ASSOCIATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Report
"Results of the reviews of the local development strategies in Borjomi, Kazbegi and Lagodekhi area"

Project
"Strengthening Rural Development Models in Georgia"

Brussels, 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction of the report....4

2. General recommendations....5

2.1. LEADER methodology....5

2.2. Role of local action groups and local development strategies....7

3. Local action group (LAG)....11

3.1. Structure of LAG and its operations....11

3.2. Cooperation and animation activities....12

3.3. Stakeholder involvement and capacity building....14

3.4. Sustainability of LAG....17

4. Local development strategy (LDS)....18

4.1. Structure and internal coherence of LDS....18

4.2. Innovative and integrative nature of LDS....21

4.3. Activities and financial plan....22

4.4. Risk analysis....23

4.5. Monitoring and evaluation....25

4.6. Projects selection....27

5. Observations, suggestions and recommendation related with Borjomi, Kazbegi and Lagodekhi development strategies....29

5.1. Results of the review of the Borjomi Local Development Strategy 2016-2020....29

5.2. Results of the review of the Kazbegi Local Development Strategy 2016-2020....30

5.3. Results of the review of the Lagodekhi Municipality Local Development Strategy 2016-2020....31

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. INTRODUCTION OF THE REPORT

The objective of this report is to give three local action groups (LAGs) in Georgia practical tools and suggestions for improving their strategies for the period 2016 - 2020. The report aims to provide feedback to Georgian LAGS and support to develop focused and high quality local development strategies (LDS) that have a clear results orientation and which are responsive to changing internal and external conditions and interventions and takes into consideration lessons learnt in EU Member States during the previous and current EU rural development policy implementation period.

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).

One of the main goals of the ENPARD project is to harmonise LEADER approach for LEADER actors (LAGs) in Georgia. In order to reach that it is necessary to review structure of the LAGs, functions of the LAGs, strategic documents and animation in the territory. This document aims to assess local development strategies of Kazbegi, Lagodheki and Borjomi LAGs and gives recommendations to relevant LAG actors and employees to be considered during updating their strategies.

All three local development strategies give a wide and comprehensive description of the territory and the main strategic lines chosen by the LAG's and involved stakeholders. Considering the fact that it's both the established LAG's and involved stakeholders first attempt to implement LEADER-method and CLLD-approach, Georgian LAG's have proven their motivation and dedication to make LEADER-approach as an effective mechanism to contribute into Georgian rural development. Each of the three strategies have their strengths which can be used as examples for current and future Georgian LAG's and all three strategies can be considered a solid basis to start implementing LEADER-approach. Similarly to all the LAG's in Europe, Georgian ones face difficulties to keep the strategic objective focused and setting up functional and effective monitoring and evaluation systems. To provide possibilities to improve the strategies and to provide better coherence with LEADER-principles and structural cohesion this report provides a set of general recommendations for the strategy review process to be conducted as a part of the project "Strengthening Rural Development Models in Georgia" (chapters 2-4) as well as observations, suggestions and recommendations related with all three development strategies (chapter 5). The feedback, comments, recommendations and suggestions are based on similar practical experiences faced by other European LAG's.

2. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The authors of the current report does not aim to evaluate strategic choices included in strategies – it is evident that the LAG's have used comprehensive background data, additional research and input from local stakeholders. The main improvement areas that LAGs could consider during the update of their strategies are related with the need to reflect the main characteristics of LEADER-approach which distinguish LEADER/CLLD local development strategies from other local strategic planning documents. Furthermore, there are some common challenges with other LAGs from all over Europe that are related with strategy preparation – finding an area-based focus and setting up viable monitoring and evaluation system to measure the impact of the efforts.
One of the practical aspects for all the LAGs to consider is the structure, set-up and the length of the strategy documents. To fully reflect the LEADER-spirit in the strategies it could be considered to move some of the background (description of the area, thematic SWOTs etc) information into the Annexes and use the core part of the document to reflect/justify the strategic choices that are found most useful to implement using the LEADER method whereas all the sectors are involved and their interests considered. LAG's should be careful to address only public sector challenges (infrastructure shortcomings, public service provision).

It is evident that the current Georgian LAG's have a valuable set of experiences and knowledge and further potential to be one of the key rural development actors – LAGs should not hesitate to describe their roles and responsibilities and decision making processes within the strategies. Cross-sectoral animation activities initiated and executed by LAG's themselves are one of the success-factors of LEADER implementation.

2.1. LEADER methodology

As the main goal of the current ENPARD project is to strengthen the LEADER approach and its methodology implementation in the target local action groups' areas the clear understanding of the connection with key elements of LEADER methodology in all three LDS is needed. Separate chapter should be used for explaining the evolution and nature of LEADER method and LDS coherence with its principles, especially with innovation and cooperation, especially in the situation whereas LEADER as a methodology is likely to be unknown to a lot of involved actors.

Shortly about LEADER evolution and it key principles

The LEADER programme (an acronym in French meaning Links between actions for the development of the rural economy) is a European Union initiative to support rural development projects initiated at the local level in order to revitalise rural areas and create jobs. LEADER I ran from 1991–93, LEADER II from 1994–99, and LEADER+ from 2000-2006. In the programming period 2007-2013 LEADER was mainstreamed in rural development policy. In the current programming period (2014-2020), the LEADER method has been extended to

cover not only rural but also coastal (FARNET) and urban areas under the Community-led Local Development (CLLD) umbrella. The CLLD, which constitutes a reinforcement of the LEADER method, gives LAGs a unique opportunity to develop their areas in a more inclusive, sustainable and integrated way in partnership with local stakeholders.

The principles of the LEADER local development approach are:

- **Area-based**: taking place in a small, homogeneous socially cohesive territory;
- **Bottom-up**: local actors design the strategy and choose the actions;
- **Public-private partnership**: LAGs are balanced groups involving public and private-sector actors, which can mobilise all available skills and resources;
- **Innovation**: giving LAGs the flexibility to introduce new ideas and methods;
- **Integration**: between economic, social, cultural and environmental actions, as distinct from a sectoral approach;
- **Networking**: allowing learning among people, organisations and institutions at local, regional, national and European levels;
- **Co-operation**: among LEADER groups, for instance to share experiences, allow complementarity or to achieve critical mass;
- **De-centralized approach**: horizontal management by involving different stakeholders.

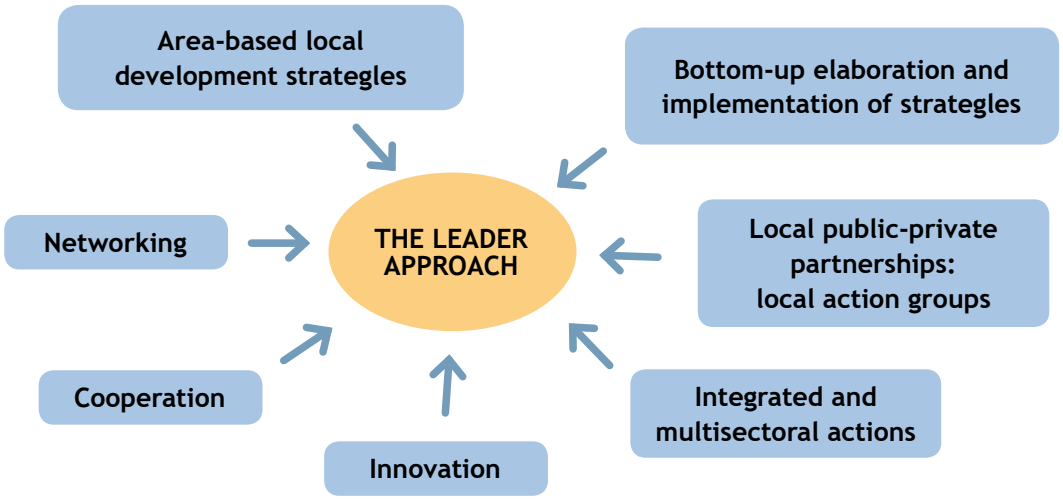

Diagram 1. *Explanation of the Leader approach*

LEADER methodology emphasises strongly the opportunity to address area-based challenges by innovative solutions and finding synergy by building linkages and networking across sectors and themes. The integrative and innovative nature of LDS is described in chapter 4.2.

2.2. Role of local action groups and local development strategies

Within European Union Member States and LAG's operate in accordance with EU-legislation. This legislation sets the main ground for the LEADER implementation within EU. Although these rules and regulations are not binding for Georgian LAGs, it would be useful to consider ways how Georgian efforts for LEADER-implementation could be synchronized and harmonize with other European frameworks. Under Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council article 34(3), **the tasks of local action groups shall include the following:**

- building the capacity of local actors to develop and implement operations including fostering their project management capabilities;
- drawing up a non-discriminatory and transparent selection procedure and objective criteria for the selection of operations, which avoid conflicts of interest, and ensure that at least 50% of the votes in selection decisions are cast by partners which are not public authorities, and allow selection by written procedure;
- ensuring coherence with the LEADER/CLLD strategy when selecting operations, by prioritising those operations according to their contribution to meeting that strategy's objectives and targets;
- preparing and publishing calls for proposals or establishing an ongoing project submission procedure, including defining selection criteria;
- receiving and assessing applications for support;
- selecting operations and fixing the amount of support and, where relevant, presenting the proposals to the body responsible for final verification of eligibility;
- monitoring the implementation of the LEADER/CLLD and the operations supported and carrying out specific evaluation activities linked to that strategy.

According to the above-described features it is recommended to pay more attention to following:

- **Capacity building activities** should be described in greater extent in all three LDS documents. Special value of LEADER method is related to the involvement, capacity building and training of local stakeholders. In order to give clear signal to LAG members and other local stakeholders about the importance of the capacity building it should be described in separate chapter of LDS with description of main needs, actions and target groups;
- In order to simplify the operations of LAG it is recommended if possible to **register LAG as an association** and define the Statutes of the organization. It increases the capacity of LAG and creates several possibilities to apply funding in Georgia and EU. This is essential also to build transnational cooperation projects with LAGs in the

European Union. Irrespective of registration of LAG as an association and in order to get LAGs effectively operational **the structure and tasks of different structural units of LAG should be clear and described in greater detail in LDS**. Possible structure of LAG is provided below on the next page.

- To be in accordance with LEADER requirements on EU level to ensure that all decisions taken by any structural unit of **LAG follow the principle that local municipalities or organizations dominated by shareholders of municipal authorities is under 50% and representation of any other specific interested group of stakeholders (tourism enterprises, farmers, etc) doesn't exceed 49%.**
- For the transparency and involvement to make information about LAG operations, structure, open calls, applying conditions, financed projects and any other possibilities of involvement (meetings, seminars, etc) **public on LAG homepage**. It is recommended to publish the calls of proposals in the newsletter, which is available for all citizens in the LAG territory. Also to enable **open access of being LAG member** to all relevant stakeholders in the LAG territory. This is also an important LEADER element to join all efforts and relevant stakeholders to achieve maximum synergy;
- **Involvement of different genders** (e.g. at least 30% of women) and age groups diversifies LAG and the implementation of LDS;
- For the successful implementation of LDS and to fulfil strategy indicators it is necessary to establish well-targeted and **internally coherent project selection system**. Selection system has to follow the interlinked logic where strategy objectives, actions and indicators are related to the evaluation system. For example application form should contain information about strategy indicators and one specific selection criteria has to be also project contribution to indicators. Project application form should contain all information that is needed to proceed with project selection and also evaluation of strategy implementation in the field of projects;
- In order to achieve **coherence with LEADER principles** it is recommended to add LEADER methodology key elements — innovation and cooperation also as projects selection criteria.
- Project (sub-grant) selection has to base on defined selection criteria and selection commission has to be well trained to make good decisions. It is highly recommended to pay attention to enable **sufficient training of selection commission** as well as to all LAG members and structural units. Using active training methods and study tours are highly recommended. About involvement and training methods please read more from chapter 3.3;
- The **real potential of local action groups** (LAGs) is to act as facilitators for their territories. The conditions need to be created to enable LAG to concentrate on their role of mobilising the area and helping the best ideas to emerge and be implemented. Research conducted by ELARD in 2017 (please see ELARD surveys http://www.elard.eu/leader-clld/publications) shows that the support of local action groups as mediators is needed to nurture integrated local development. **LAGs needs to increase their capacity to work across sectors and bring together different stakeholders**. The task

of LAGs is not to be just the source of funding and to act as an additional administrative layer, it is to act as a real development organisation initiating cooperation projects and enabling training and networking, with adequate financial and organisational support. It is highly recommended to pay attention to **continuous training of LAG operational body and staff**.

According to the Article 33 of the EU Regulation No 1303/2013 local development strategy shall contain at least the following elements:

- the definition/description of the area and population covered by the strategy (including size of the area, number of local self-government units and towns, number of inhabitants);
- an analysis of the development needs and potential of the area, including an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis);
- a description of the strategy and its objectives, a description of the integrated and innovative character of the strategy and a hierarchy of objectives, including measurable targets for outputs or results. For results, targets may be expressed in quantitative or qualitative terms. The strategy shall be consistent with the EAFRD programme;
- a description of the community involvement process in the development of the strategy;
- an action plan demonstrating how objectives are translated into actions;
- a description of the management and monitoring arrangements of the strategy, demonstrating the capacity of the local action group to implement the strategy and a description of specific arrangements for evaluation;
- the financial plan of the strategy, including the planned allocation from each of the ESI Funds concerned.

It is important that all the mandatory content elements are included in LDS. However the exact order and number of content elements is to be decided by the LAG based on local conditions and strategy preparation process. LAG's are allowed and encouraged to re-order or add voluntary content elements (ie risk analysis, stakeholder involvement plan or others) if justified with local needs.

All three Georgian strategies reviewed give a wide overview about the background of the LAG-area. The main structure of the strategy is well described with on aim and related objectives. It is evident that the main strategic components are developed in participatory manner. Special attention is paid to describe project selection procedures. However there are some essential aspects that should be strengthened in all three strategies:

- Cohesion of strategy elements – it is suggested to establish **clear linkages between** aim/vision-objectives-actions/measures-indicators-project selection-evaluation of strategy implementation. It is very important to enable **simple traceability of delivery of the LDS implementation** and monitor its' success. This is also useful for the update or renewal of the strategy;

- Clear understanding of strategy objectives selection and focus – it is needed to explain how finally these strategy **objectives have been selected** and how these were related to the involvement of local citizens and stakeholders;
- Social inclusion and development of human capacity – it has been described in the strategies that big problem is related to the people leaving from the area as well as weak human capacity with lack of knowledge, skills and awareness. Therefore it is suggested to pay more attention to training of people and even think about increasing the human capacity by adding training and capacity building as horizontal activity/ measure of strategies, which can support to achieve all strategy objectives. It is also suggested **to consider small scale social and youth projects**;
- Defining priorities – the EU regulation refers to a "**hierarchy of objectives**" making it clear that not everything can be achieved at once and that the community needs to decide collectively on its **most important objectives and select the actions** that will best contribute to achieving these. The priority of objectives must be pointed out in the strategy. It will be the agreement of the LAG on which objective is the most important, which one is second, third, etc. Prioritizing objectives is important also because of limiting resources and makes it possible to exclude activities if there are not enough financial means. Moreover, there is the possibility to **allocate more financial means to priority activities** and to put them at the beginning of the time schedule for strategy implementation;
- Risk analysis – as there are several threats related to the funding, social and political environment, etc it is needed to include **overwhelming risk analysis** in LDS in order to point out mitigating measures to minimise and overcome with risks, pleas see example in chapter 4.5;
- Financial plan – it is needed to describe in the LDS **financial allocations between different activities/measures**. LAG running costs and animation budget should be planned as well;
- **Clear and simple evaluation and monitoring model** of local development strategy is needed to establish. It is recommended that strategy evaluation will be a part of a community's learning process and it is therefore very important that local action groups continuously collect information and evaluate the implementation of their strategies. There are different good methods that should be explored, example is provided in chapter 4.6. In Sweden, storytelling methodology has been used to good effect;
- Strategies tend to loose focus with long description of the area. Instead, the strategies could focus on the very local strategy, what actually needs to be achieved in the area, the needed action to be taken. All three strategies have less than 25% local strategy, which brings a greater risk that the strategies will actually not be used as the working-tool it is supposed to be. It is suggested to enclose most of the descriptive parts of the strategy into annexes in order to leave **more space and attention to strategic choices**.

3. LOCAL ACTION GROUP (LAG)

This chapter includes suggestions for the structure of LAG and its' operations, LAG cooperation and animation activities, involvement and capacity building of local stakeholders and finally the sustainability of LAG.

3.1. Structure of LAG and its operations

LAG should describe their human and financial capacity to implement LDS. If the LAG has any experiences in the implementation of LEADER-approach or experience in implementation of projects outside LEADER this should be described as well.

The LAG should describe it's capability to implement the strategy. It basically assures the quality of strategy implementation.
As the structure of LAG, its structural units and description of the role and tasks of different units were not very clearly described in all three strategies the following simplifications should be considered and added to the strategy under corresponding chapter if relevant:

- List of LAG members – list of members according to their belonging into different sectors, main principles to become a member;
- Background of the LAG – general information about establishment, other important features related to the LAG can be pointed out here;
- General assembly or the highest organ of LAG (please see also diagram 2 on the next page) – its main role and tasks. It is suggested that all members will compose the highest organ of LAG;
- Board or the operational body and its commissions, if relevant – their tasks and roles, election principles;
- Staff (including voluntary staff) – how many persons, their positions, general work tasks;
- Project selection commission – main principles of their work and election principles;
- Monitoring and/or revision board – main principles of their work and election principles;
- LAG experiences so far, if relevant;
- Organizational development of LAG – the capacity-building activities for the LAG itself will be described here (involvement and training activities, involvement of members, etc).

It is important to make it clear and transparent how organizations/people for different LAG units are elected. At the moment it is not fully described in the strategies how the election process will be conducted. Another important issue is the form of partnership of the LAG. One possibility is to form a partnership and organize LAG as an association, NGO. Then the LAG constitutes its Statutes and describes more precisely all necessary issues in this document.

Since it is not clear what kind of organization owns the LAG, it is not clear what juridical responsibility the LAG has. When there is no NGO behind the LAG, a lot of responsibility will go to the manager of LAG. But it is hard/impossible to be the employee of the LAG and at the same time the person that judges on who can be in the LAG or not. Also when conflict of interest arises, it is too much of a burden on single persons to solve this, where a complete organization could handle it more transparent and secure way.

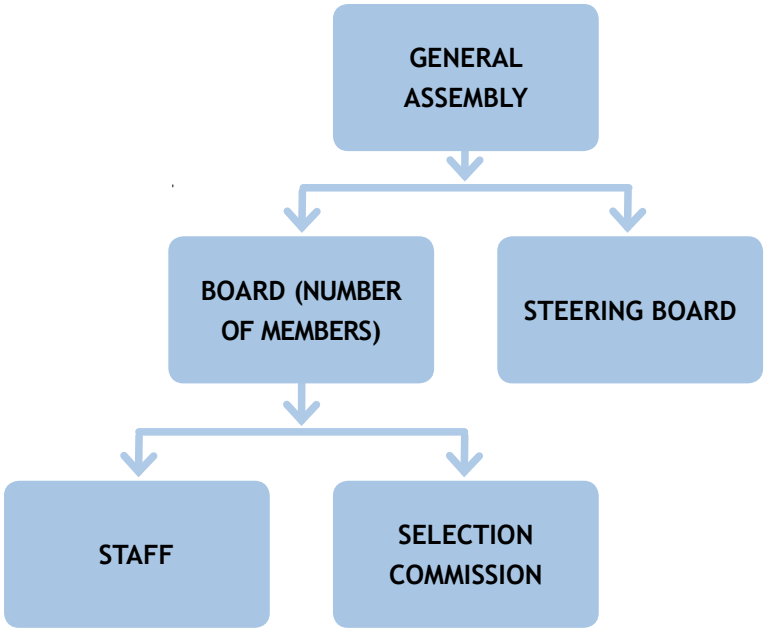

***Diagram 2**. Example of possible structure of LAG*

3.2. Cooperation and animation activities

LAG cooperation projects

Cooperation – inside LAG territory, inter-territorial with other territories and LAGs and transnational – is key component of LDS implementation. LAG's should describe their perspective co-operation projects or fields of cooperation in their LDS.

Cooperation (inter-territorial and transnational projects) is a way to widen local views and bring new knowledge to the area in order to improve local strategies implementation. Cooperation of a LAG area with other geographical areas can be a key component of a LDS or an additional asset to the strategy. It can boost the innovative character of local development actions and contribute to increased competitiveness of the area through: capacity building and bringing in new business partners; diffusion of innovation, know-how and new skills. In addition to the potential benefits of inter-territorial co-operation (within a country), transnational cooperation (TNC) gives supplementary European added value to local development.

Several strategic attempts in all three LAGs in Georgia seem to address similar problems. Although some of them are focused mainly on "hard fact implementation" on a local level (e.g. installing a slaughterhouse), inter-LAG co-operation in planning, sharing good-practices and common learning could add value to the local implementation. For example, financing and building a regional/local greenhouse is a regional topic whereas common considerations on what´s best to plant in these greenhouses or strategies how to supply hotels or local markets could be based upon co-operative approaches, that can be developed together among all three, resp. eight existing LAGs or in cooperation with international partners.

Here are some ideas for co-operation within the present LDS-framework:

LAG-NETWORK / LAG-COOPERATION LEVEL	
AGRICULTURE	• Establishing "local product" brand(s) with related quality standards • Common strategies on cultivation of berries and bee-keeping/ honey production; developing new products and/or new marketing opportunities • Co-operation projects in developing innovative ways for irrigation • Sharing experience with short supply chains (especially between agriculture and tourism, local markets, etc.) • Common approach on how to involve youth in agriculture/ or generally making agriculture more attractive as a field to work in%
TOURISM	• Establishing eco-tourism: developing a common approach how to develop tourism as a value added of the Georgian protected areas • Since nature tourism already happens in some parts of the LAGs: sharing experience on nature tourism/ organizing study trips • Common marketing strategy (in line with national tourism approaches) • Common considerations of suitable services for supporting tourism businesses
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	• Sharing experience with sensitizing people for environmental friendly lifestyle, e.g. prevent poaching or illegal logging in natural protected areas • Innovative and needs-based approaches to solve waste collection and transportation • Alternative and sustainable energy sources
ANIMATION/ IMPLEMENTING LEADER	• Common ways to communicate LEADER and it´s added value • Sharing experience with capacity building amongst farmers or tourist businesses • Sharing good practices of work with youth in the rural areas

It is highly recommended that all three LAGs include cooperation activities in their LDS. This can take the form of specific cooperation activities or a comprehensive cooperation strategy, depending on the needs identified in the SWOT analysis.

Co-operation projects require a higher degree of coordination than ordinary local projects. In many cases they also have a strong collective or territorial dimension and therefore it is

suggested to involve other regional development organizations and agencies while preparing and implementing these projects. The final beneficiary of the support to a co-operation project is LAG. LAG makes provision for cooperation in its action plan and financial plan. It is recommended that cooperation projects are selected by approval of General Assembly or members meeting of the LAG.

LAG animation activities and development projects

One of the strongest messages from the European Commission that came out of past LEADER implementation experience is that local partnerships must not be seen as the last, local link in a long chain for delivering policies decided elsewhere. They are not local one-stop-shops for holding calls and collecting applications. The real value of the partnership comes from its role in bringing local people together to stimulate ideas and co-produce projects which would not have happened – or would have been much more difficult to develop without the LAG.

LAGs are development organizations in the area and should include in the strategy special activities and projects to contribute to the better development of the area. The animation activities usually include networking, introducing innovative methods and solutions, marketing of the area, improving the skills and knowledge of target groups, etc. But the activities can also addressed to very specific problems (for example social inclusion) and other issues.

In addition to inter-territorial and transnational co-operation projects, LAGs deal with other animation activities to contribute to the development of the area. Usually LAGs use a part of their budget meant for running costs for animation activities (e.g. seminars, trainings, networking, study visits, promotion etc). In addition to cooperation projects and animation activities from running costs there can be an essential need to implement additional development projects in the LAG area. For example in less advantaged sub-regions, target groups need to be activated or special areas or problems that need to be improved. Doing these kinds of activities LAG should pay attention to the principle not to destroy grassroots level initiative. The role of the LAG is rather to activate people and helps to start up projects, activities than doing things for local community.

3.3. Stakeholder involvement and capacity building

The participatory approach that was used during the preparation of the LDS as well as stakeholder involvement plan for strategy implementation are described slightly and therefore it is suggested to describe them both more comprehensively. Stakeholder involvement is one of the key elements to ensure that the bottom-up principle are used during the strategy preparation. All the strategies reflect that LAG's have put a significant efforts into stakeholder involvement, but the essence of the input collect could be elaborated further within the strategies.

According to the Guidance on LEADER/CLLD for Local Actors from the European Commission, the strategy, and the projects that flow from it, is meant to emanate from the community. It

follows then that participation should not simply be an add-on, conducted at the start of the strategy to justify funding. Consultants, universities and other external experts can all help to provide a broader view and assist with the analysis of the data and writing of the strategy, but there should be **evidence of a genuine dialogue with and between local citizens at each of the key stages in the design of the strategy**:

- In the identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats;
- In the translation of these into the main development needs and potential;
- In the choice of the main objectives, specific objectives, desired results and the priority given to these;
- In the selection of the types of actions that can lead to these results;
- And in the design and calculation of the budget.

There are a large number of participative techniques, which can help partnerships identify the issues, which really matter to people on the ground and to mobilize the ideas and energy of grass roots initiatives. The strategy document should provide evidence that it is the result of this kind of process.

Additionally to LDS preparation it is very important to continue with involvement activities during LDS implementation. In order to include all relevant stakeholders and the various needs of the LAG territory it is suggested to include the comprehensive stakeholder involvement plan into the LDS. This plan should include the objective of the stakeholder involvement, name the stakeholders and stakeholder groups to be targeted, and last but not least set out the levels and methods of involvement, as well as the communication methods to be used.

It is important that all the relevant counterparts are enabled to acknowledge their role in the involvement process and they can provide feedback about the results of the involvement activities. The involvement plan itself should not be an internal or closed document – similarly to the strategy it should be a simplified agreement between the relevant stakeholders about the way they are to be included in the LDS implementation process.

Taking into account the expectations and the scope of the LDS as well as the LAG's resources (human, time and financial) it is likely that not all of the stakeholder involvement levels (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower) are necessary and possible to implement during the LDS preparation.
It depends on the local characteristics and stakeholder expectations and profiles, which methods could prove to be most effective to use and describe within the LDS.

Possible involvement and capacity building methods to design/update/ implement LDS:

- Brainstorming and involvement seminars, meetings using active participation methods as (open space technology, World café, group work etc);
- Interviews with local stakeholders (municipality leaders, county governors, development agency employees, local business people, etc) to map their project ideas;

- Electronical questionnaires to map the expectations of the target groups;
- Information seminars to introduce the results of the process of drawing up the strategy and outcomes from previous discussions and seminars;
- Trainings and study tours for target groups and LAG operational organs to collect new knowledge to implement a strategy;
- Meetings of LAG operational organs (strategy commission, board, general assembly) to analyse material from involvement process and make strategic decisions;
- Dissemination of results of the strategy implementation and success stories involving regular and social media (announcements, articles, interviews, newsletters, posts, etc).

In addition to methods that LAG can execute during strategy preparation and review there are number of capacity building forms that LAG's could plan and implement as ongoing activities during such as:

- Information sessions and outreach work in the community;
- Support for bringing people together and community organization;
- One to one or collective advice and support for developing projects;
- Training on specific fields;
- Development and networking projects that influence a bigger target group or that are addressed at special needs;
- Other.

It is absolutely essential for the LAG to have staff in the office, which is sufficiently qualified to carry out these functions. Additionally specific capacity can be involved/hired externally. **The action plan of the strategy includes the description of the main animation activities and areas of possible LAG projects.**

In addition to the capacities to implement LDS the methods to arrange the workflow during the LDS-implementation is important. The most common tool for LAGs is to describe the implementation of the strategy through integrated work packages (see diagram below), which can for example include:

1. Management and administration to ensure implementation of the strategy and to develop it further;
2. Processing and selection of project applications – taking care of the

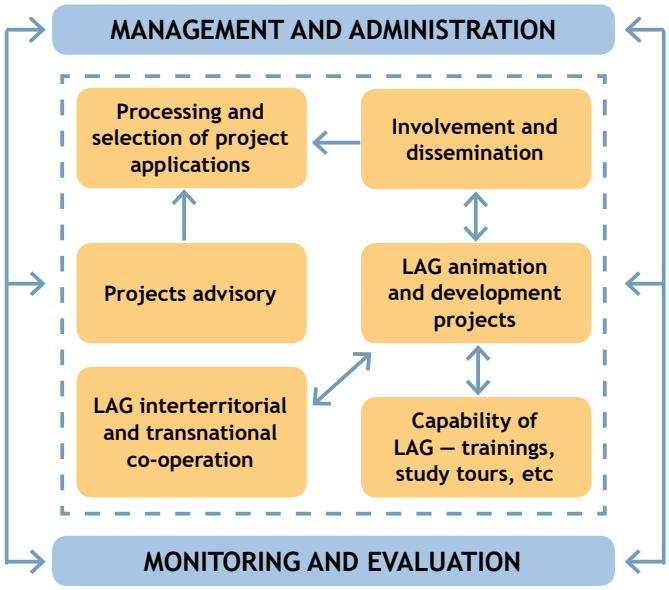

***Diagram 3**. Example of work packages*

quality of the projects and accordance with the vision and objectives of the strategy. Provision of support and advice to potential applicants.

3. Involvement and dissemination – preparing potential applicants for quality projects;
4. Inter-territorial and transnational co-operation, including rural-urban co-operation – to get new knowledge and to activate important processes;
5. Animation activities and development projects – animation activities for the area, development projects; to arise the capability of LAG, trainings, study tours, etc;
6. Monitoring and evaluation – to evaluate the results of the strategy implementation and learn about mistakes.

3.4. Sustainability of LAG

The LAG's sustainability is based on many factors and varies greatly depending on where the strategy is implemented and who is the strategy bearer. What steps the LAG takes to promote sustainability should be described in the strategy. The most common options for promoting sustainability include: implementing follow-up projects, collecting membership fees, contributing per capita, multi-resource support (EU, state, region, foundations, collections), organizational gains, sponsorship support, etc.

Some possible solutions beyond the initial funding

As the survival of the LAG may be threatened after the completion of the present project and funding, the following proposals are made:

- Negotiating and signing framework agreements and collaboration agreements with the Government, NGOs, associations and financial bodies;
- Harmonizing work methodologies with different governmental and development agencies to create economic synergies in the area;
- Empowering LAGs by including them as a consultant and participant in future investment programmes in the territory;
- Continuing to strengthen LAGs through on-going trainings of local agents, and the promotion of the methodology through the creation of horizontal networks (with other territories) and vertical networks (with other institutions).
- Establishing and strengthening GALAG (Georgian LEADER/Rural Network). Establishing partnerships between GALAG and other relevant stakeholder organisations, e.g. associations of municipalities, farmers, key NGOs etc;
- LAGs should be understood and accepted by NGOs, institutions and local government bodies as a relevant player and interlocutor in the territory;
- Integration of LAGs/LEADER tool into local public policies;
- Promotion of LEADER methodology and its successes in Georgia and EU Member States to regional governments, to central government, to relevant Ministries and European and other international institutions and donors;

- Crucial step is advocacy and lobbying in relevant places in order to become a member of government/ministries´ and regional governments´ working and advisory groups;
- GALAG should have sufficient human capacity and power to take part in all necessary platforms.

4. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (LDS)

It is important that the LDS's that is prepared based on LEADER/CLLD-principles are not seen just a replacement of other local strategic planning document or a formality necessary to be eligible to financial resources. It should justify the existence of the LAG, reflecting its specific contribution to addressing the rural development issues, it should also offer arguments for the role planned for he LEADER approach in this process. This chapter offers a range of suggestions how to reflect the main LEADER-principles in LDS's.

4.1. Structure and internal coherence of LDS

All the strategies should have common structure of strategic documents, it means analytical part, strategic part, implementation part, monitoring and evaluation part and also action plan is highly recommended.

Analytical part
LDS should contain problem analysis. All 3 strategies should have a SWOT analysis divided into the field of interest sections according to the priority topics of the region (just Lagodheki did it), and, in conclusion, there should be a final single SWOT analysis that would contain only about 10 prioritized points for each part of the analysis (strengths, weaknesses, risks and opportunities).

Strategic part
The strategic part should contain all the topics that are based on the analytical part and not just the topics related to financial resources. The strategic part has to have a clearly defined structure and needs to be prioritized. From this section it must be clear what needs to be addressed in the short term and what, on the other hand, in the mid-term and long-term run. This part should contain vision and should be broken down into strategic goals, specific goals and activities/measures. The measures and activities should also get a budget. How important is each measure? Is it a "has to be done" or "could be done" within the strategy? If it is in the category "has to be done", then budget allocation has to be done as well. Percentage is suitable, please see also chapter 4.3.

Implementation part
This part is almost completely missing in all three strategies. It has to be added. The implementation part is very important so that it is clear who will be responsible for what steps to implement the strategic goals of the strategy. The implementation part is actually

the actions to be taken, by whom, around the measures and objectives. It also states who is the target group for each activity and can serve very well as a tool for the manager and the LAG in the advising and selection process.

Monitoring and evaluation part

The strategy addresses this part very differently and clear procedures are not described. Some LAGs have at least indicators set and others do not. Therefore, it is necessary to set indicators for all objectives /measures in order to measure the change and achieve the target or gradual value. Two of the three LDS (Borjomi and Kazbegi LDS) contain indicators. There are several indicators that seem useful for the actions but all of them should be critically reflected in the following terms:

- Is the indicator closely enough related to the respective action or are there too many other factors (in addition to the LEADER-action) that can affect the indicator value? E.g. if you measure general agricultural productivity of an area and this value decreases, one cannot automatically conclude, that the respective LEADER-actions in that field has not worked. They might even influence the productivity positively, however, other circumstances with higher impact on productivity may level off this positive effect;
- Does the indicator reflect the "theory of change" of the action? This question is quite related to the former one but leads more to the process-aspect of an action. Some indicators should be more precise in a sense, as currently they measure just the very end of an impact chain. In the case of Kazbegi´s indicator "Statistic data from local agriculture centre: youth involvement in farming" one could think, what process might be necessary that leads to this end. If education initiatives are a key lever for this, it should be formulated as an indicator, e.g. "number of new education initiatives for 12-16 year olds in the agriculture sector" and "number of young people taking part". The effect would be that even if no change is seen at the very end stage (young people involved in agriculture) but there are new education initiatives and there are young people who attend them, it is plausible to say, that change in the field happened;
- Does the indicator fit the time constraints? If you have a 2-years LEADER-period the indicator should be compatible to the changes, that are likely to be after the two years (or even earlier points in time if one wants to use the indicators for monitoring purposes);
- Is there an adequate cost/benefit relation between the effort that is necessary to measure the indicator (e.g. "population satisfaction index" Kazbegi LDS, p. 27) and the use for steering the strategy? Does the LAG at all have the (financial, personal) capacities to measure the indicator?;
- Do indicators reflect the added value of LEADER? If indicators are a means of steering LEADER development in a LAG they should be distinct from indicators that could be also implemented in pure infrastructure funding schemes.

Recommendations for individual indicators should be subject to discussion processes in-situ as this topic is quite context sensitive. But before that, all participants should agree on a common view about which function indicators in LDSs should be fulfilled. Are they relevant to identify if projects are in line with LDS goals, are they used for monitoring the progress or

do they simply lead the way for ex-post evaluating how well the LEADER-approach worked in the LAG. This makes a difference for phrasing the indicators. Currently most of them can be interpreted in the sense of "how do we measure progress/change" but not in a sense of "what´s the target value of these indicators".

Action plan

The Action Plan defines a short-term goal, e.g. setting jobs for the next calendar year. The action plan should be revised and set up each year based on the reflection of the implementation of the previous period.

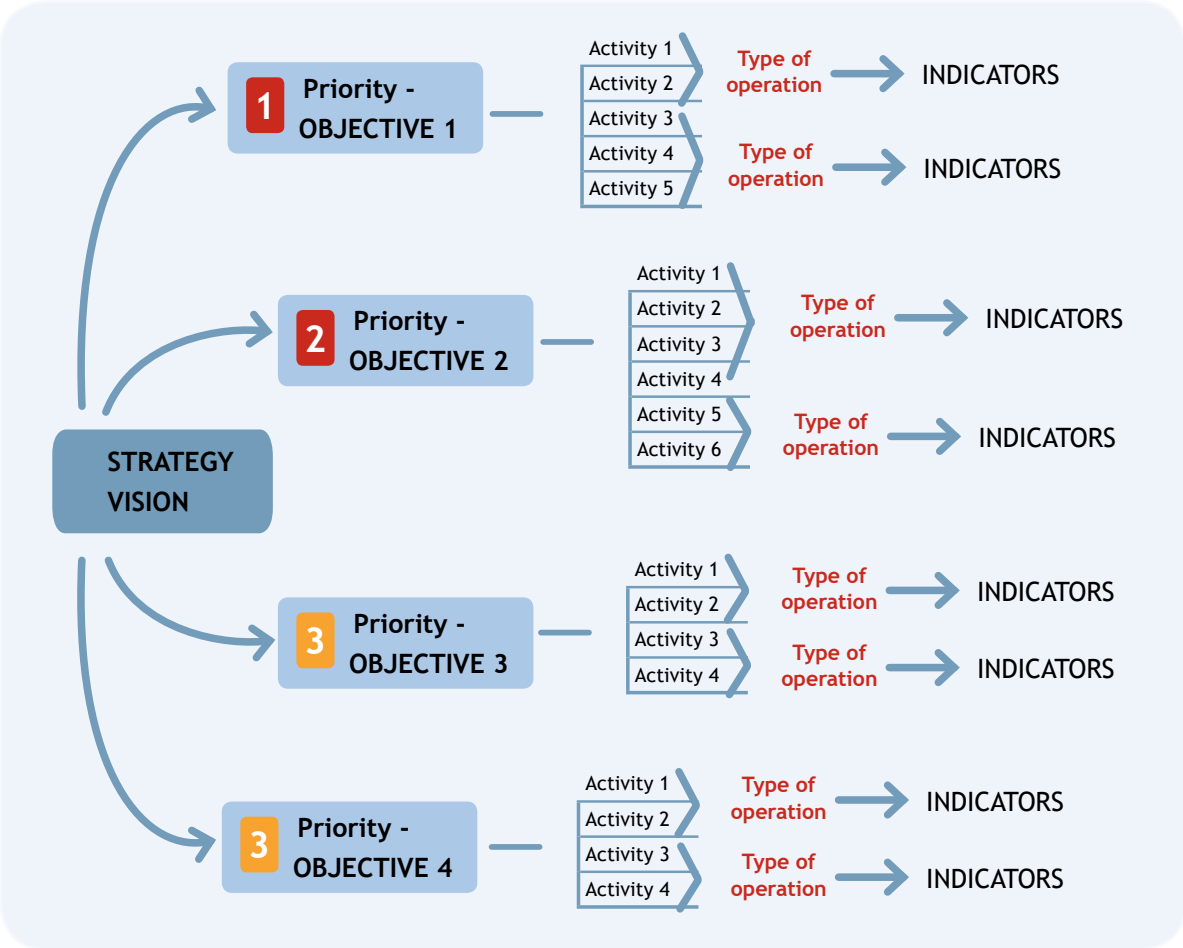

Diagram 4. *A coherent system of LDS implementation*

Coherence of LDS

In order to achieve internal coherence of LDS it is important to build the holistic system of LDS delivery by linking vision-objectives-activities/measures (types of operations)-indicators with each other. Please see the illustrative diagram below.

There can be different levels in the structure of a LDS. The LAG can design its own logic of the structure. The structure described in diagram below is merely a suggestion to propose

one way to include coherence throughout the delivery of LDS. In order to achieve holistic picture of the whole strategy or to make strategy easier to follow there is often a need for different structure or for adding some elements or levels, e.g. to add a level “strategic area”, “sub-area” etc.

> The EU regulation refers to a **“hierarchy of objectives”** making it clear that not everything can be achieved at once and that the community needs to decide collectively on its most important objectives and select the actions that will best contribute to achieving these.

The priority of objectives must be pointed out in the strategy. Prioritizing objectives is important also because of limiting resources and makes it possible to exclude activities if there are not enough financial means. Moreover, there is the possibility to allocate more financial means to priority activities and to put them at the beginning of the time schedule for strategy implementation.

4.2. Innovative and integrative nature of LDS

Each LDS shall set out integrated and innovative local solutions to local problems. Innovation in the rural development context may be technological, but also non-technological, organizational or social. The innovative nature of the LDS should be reflected within proposed actions with a boosting impact for a local development or in proposed ways to solve local problems in a new way. These actions and ways could mean new services, products of activities.

The LEADER/CLLD approach does not foresee innovation in the sense of high level research and development or new technology (although, of course, these are not excluded and if necessary, a described co-operation perspective with universities or other research and development institutions could effective reflect the innovative nature of the LDS). In this regard the innovative approach should mean a fresh look at both problems and opportunities and explore new responses, which can lead to longer term and more sustainable solutions.

The meaning of integrated and multi-sectoral development must be adapted to the type of problem and area being dealt with. Partnerships can be seen as useful ways to integrate sectors such as agriculture, food, crafts, rural tourism, local services and the environment. To do this, LAG could design “integrated” sequences of support measures (such as training, capital grants, promotional support, business support) that all pulled in the same strategic direction. As LEADER strategies are often implemented in fairly low-density rural areas they are able to take a fairly holistic approach in terms of integrating most of the drivers of local development.

Linkages between sectors can be both horizontal and vertical, include rural-urban linkages and cooperation with coastal areas.

In rural areas integration does not mean that strategies should try to tackle everything at once or give everything the same weight. As mentioned earlier, communities need to make choices and focus on the objectives and actions that have the greatest chances of bringing about the changes they want to achieve.

There may already be a history of past initiatives and a number of organizations active in the same field. So local partnerships need to position their strategies in a way that adds value to what already exists and mobilize the maximum support around it.

Integration can mean:

- Starting with one or more issues, themes, problems or target groups that mobilize the community but placing them within a wider context and building linkages outwards to the other sectors and actors that can influence the situation;
- Building vertical linkages within sectors and supply chains, as well as horizontal linkages between sectors;
- Connecting deprived areas with areas of opportunity (e.g. rural areas with market towns, and deprived neighbourhoods with centers of employment growth);
- Building linkages between local, regional and national levels of governance. This is particularly important when dealing with "anchor" sectors and institutions like schools, hospitals and universities;
- Ensuring that different local support measures are sequenced and pulled together to achieve the same strategic objectives. Integration in terms of what is done, who does it, and how it is done.

4.3. Activities and financial plan

The LDS must be set out in a realistic, clear and logical action plan that is feasible. It should identify what will be done, the reasons for why it will be done, by whom and by when, as well as the allocation of financial resources. It provides a framework for the implementation of the strategy by defining the actions that will support the achievement of local objectives. It is recommended that the action plan include the annual breakdown of the planned activities for the period where strategy is being planned to be implemented.

The action plan will describe all the activities of the strategy in detail. The logical structure of the strategy must follow and reasons must be pointed out to understand why these kinds of activities were selected to implement the strategy. The coherence of objectives, the activities, measures/types of operations and indicators should therefore again be presented.

The action plan needs to consider at least the following four points:

- What kind of actions does the LAG foresee to achieve the objectives;
- Who will be responsible for the implementation of the actions (LAG, different project beneficiaries under each action);

- When do the actions need to take place (timetable for implementing the strategy);
- How big are the financial allocations for actions. The budget for each action can be presented in percentages.

The financial plan should provide indicative estimates of how much money will be dedicated to the different types of action. The planning must distinguish between expenditure for **the implementation of the strategy itself, cooperation and running costs and animation**.

DIVISION OF FINANCES				
OBJECTIVES	**Objective 1 (total allocation %)**	**Objective 2 (total allocation %)**		**Objective 3 (total allocation %)**
ACTIVITIES	Activity 1 Activity 2 Activity 3	Activity 4 Activity 5	Activity 1 Activity 2	Activity 1 Activity 2 Activity 3
TYPE OF OPERATIONS (MEASURES)	Measure 1 (allocation %)	Measure 2 (allocation %)	Measure 3 (allocation %)	Measure 4 (allocation %)
Inter-territorial and transnational co-operation %				
Running costs and animation %				

Table 1 *Example of division of finances*

DIVISION OF FINANCES BY YEARS					
YEARS	**Budget (total amount)**	Type of operation (Measure)1	Type of operation (Measure) 2	**Co-operation budget**	**Running costs and animation budget**
2018	%	%	%	%	%
2019	%	%	%	%	%
etc					

Table 2. *Example of division of finances by years*

4.4. Risk analysis

The LAG's capability and methods to evaluate risks and to prevent or mitigate their negative impact should be reflected within the LDS. There can be external risks related to political, economical, social environment and internal risks as human resources, administrative burden, limited budget etc. LAGs should consider risks that can influence the implementation of LDS and foresee preventive activities to soften or avoid risks or adjustments.

In order to analyze the potential external risks it is suggested to use the PEST approach to classify different types of risks: Political, Economical, Socio-Cultural and Technological. For internal risks the factors directly related with the LAG itself should be analyzed. If the potential external and internal risks are identified their realization potential should be evaluated (low, moderate or high) and their potential impact (weak, moderate, strong or very strong/terminative) should be assessed.

One possible approach to include risk analysis in the LDS is by using the following table format (table includes examples of the potential risks, the list of risks into the LDS should be in accordance with local conditions):

RISK ANALYSIS				
Description	**Realization potential**	**Impact**	**Preventive activities**	**Mitigative/corrective activities**
POLITICAL FACTORS				
1. Changes in legislation 2. …	Medium	Strong	Ongoing co-operation with relevant partners to be informed about the potential changes	Strategy revision
ECONOMIC FACTORS				
1. General economic recession in certain sector 2. …	Medium	Medium	Early consideration of different development scenarios, flexibility	Strategy adaption, ie correction of the co-financing rate
SOCIAL FACTORS				
1. Increase in development differences within the LAG area 2. …	Medium	Medium	Special attention to be paid to remote and passive areas	Effective information delivery, stakeholder participation
TECHNOLOGICAL FACTORS				
1. Non-Operational web-systems (webpage, project application environment etc) 2. …	High	Medium	Finding a permanent and reliable co-operation partner for technical support services	The continuous development of effective and up-to-date web-solutions
INTERNAL RISKS				
1. Increased administrative burden of LAG 2. …	Medium	High	Continuous training of the staff, close co-operation with partners, effective management tools and methods (IT-systems)	Recruitment of new/ additional staff members, external consultations

***Table 3**. Template table for risk analysis*

4.5. Monitoring and evaluation

There is also another new aspect in the EU regulatory framework to which the LAGs should pay attention: The requirement to explain "the monitoring arrangements and the specific arrangements for evaluation" of the LDS. **All objectives must meet measurable targets for outputs or results**. The strategy gives the overview of monitoring and evaluation procedures. Detailed procedures of monitoring and evaluation activities should be described in evaluation plan.

The purpose of monitoring is to get feedback how you are doing in your LAG - if you are approching to your objectives. For this purpose it is very important to set up a transparent, simple and easily accessible monitoring system. Also as regards monitoring it is recommended to use ICT systems that enable to generate necessary reports at any time. Ongoing monitoring process is closely interlinked with the LDS evaluation processing by providing a necesarry baseline information for the periodical evaluation of the LDS progress.

A possible example of monitoring and evaluation arrangements is provided below.

EXAMPLE OF ORGANIZING THE STRATEGY MONITORING AND EVALUATION		
	STRATEGY MONITORING	**STRATEGY EVALUATION**
Organised by	Relevant organ of LAG (board, monitoring commission etc.)	Relevant organ of LAG (board, monitoring commission etc.)
Responsible body	LAG staff	LAG staff/ external experts
Content of monitoring	• Budget usage • Applications statistics • Projects contribution to objectives and indicators of strategy • LAG animation activities and co-operation projects • Contibution into national strategic objectives	• Annual monitoring reports • Results and impacts of implemented projects
Timetable	Ongoing	2 times during the whole period
Report period	Annual	4 years
	Board (operational body of LAG)	General Assembly (highest decisive unit of LAG)
Purpose of the report	To prepare annual strategy implementation plan; Improvements to implementation mechanisms	Strategy revision

***Table 4**. Example of organizing the strategy monitoring and evaluation*

As with any other part of the LDS there should be a clear logic linking the needs, proposed activities/measures and resources to provide a clear focus and direction for what is done. This is essential for steering any evaluation activity, whether it is self-evaluation or externally contracted. In other words LAGs need to understand and clearly state what exactly they intend to monitor and evaluate and to achieve through monitoring and evaluation. This is needed in order to plan, resource and undertake these activities efficiently and effectively. It is vital that the monitoring and evaluation system design and performance clearly benefits of the LAG work. The objectives should address the monitoring and evaluation of the delivery of the LDS in terms of its own specific intervention logic and the specific objectives for LEADER-implementation in Goergia or national strategic objectives. The failure to do so adequately in the past in EU Member States was a key weakness identified by the European Court of Auditors.

An effective monitoring and evaluation system within the LDS could act as a basis for strategy revision needs. The performance against the strategy can lead to the need for a for strategy revision. This performance can only be the evidence if an adequate and functional monitoring and evaluation system has been set up. Additionally, strategy revision should be foreseen for other objective and obvious (formal) reasons, i.e. substantial changes in external conditions, changes in local conditions (memberships) or financial constraints. There is a need to reflect how the LAG would deal with changing circumstances in that respect. However, it is important that the LDS would reflect that it is vital that the revised objectives remain measurable in case a revision of the strategy is undertaken.

In addition to monitoring and evaluation process description in the LDS every LAG should prepare an evalution plan to describe the monitoring and evaluation process in more detailed way. This plan shoud be the framework for assessing your LAGs performance in implementing LEADER and its specificities including systems and mechanisms to manage financial and output data to ensure that the data specified and reported relates to the RDP and LDS specific indicators and targets. And indicative outline of the LAG Evaluation Plan could contain following:

- What are the LAGs objectives for monitoring and evaluation, covering both LDS and RDP levels?
- What are the arrangements through which the processes will be managed?
- Are there any specific LDS or LEADER topics or themes the LAG will wish to research or evaluate?
- What are the data requirements for monitoring and evaluating the LDS and how this will be managed?
- What are the tools and methods to be employed?
- What is timeline and any relevant milestones?
- -What is the proposed approach to communicating evaluation activities and for the communication of evaluation findings?
- What are the resources required?

4.6. Projects selection

All three LDS include chapters related to the project selection, but there are still some important aspects missing and clearer structure is needed. The LDS should include information about the **project selection criteria, the principles how the selection commission will be composed, procedure of awarding higher intensity of support and procedures to avoid conflicts of interest**. Current chapter of the report provides recommendations how to organize project selection and how to describe it in the LDS in a more comprehensive way.

The **selection criteria** must be set up in a way, which ensures the achievement of strategy objectives. Another very important aspect here is to ensure the contribution of the selection criteria to the monitoring of the implementation of the strategy. To achieve the **control of strategy implementation can be made by connecting selection criteria with strategy objectives and indicators**. Selection criteria give also good possibilities to focus on specific issues that have a critical value for reaching the expected outcomes of the strategy (for example co-operation, innovation etc.).
Selection should also pay attention to the general quality of the application: the rationale of the project and budget, high quality outcomes, sustainability, project applicant capability, etc.
Criteria have different weights in the meaning of strategy implementation. There are more important and less important aspects. Therefore we suggest considering the value of different criteria and to give them different weights. There could also be minimum requirements for project application: this can consist in a certain amount of points that the application must collect during the selection.
The selection procedure and criteria must be simple, transparent and understandable for the local community. A suggestion is not to set up too many criteria. A reasonable maximum could be around eight criteria. General information about the selection procedure and selection criteria must be provided in the strategy. This can be described in greater detail in the LAG internal regulation document for project selection process.

Selection criteria are also a useful tool to focus strategy implementation. Therefore this topic should be very well considered and described. A distinction can be made between universal and objectively based criteria. There is moreover the possibility to give special weights to different criteria.

The **selection commission** should include persons who have a good knowledge about the local needs and the ability to understand the “bigger picture” as regards the integrated development of the area. The selection commission can involve also additional experts if specific knowledge is needed, as well as representatives of co-operation partners, if relevant. Another recommendation is to include alternate members in the selection commission, since certain members of the selection commission might not be allowed to participate in a specific round of selection, if there is relation between project applicant and the member of the selection commission. The selection commission also has to follow the rule of 49%, which means that at each decision making level there can’t be more than 49% representatives of

any single interest group. Skills of the selection commission can be improved by organizing trainings, seminars, study tours etc. and LAGs are encouraged to describe planed activities of selection commission's capacity building in LDS.

General information about the selection procedure and selection criteria must be provided in the strategy. As the selection process includes several procedures (the preparation and the work of the selection commission, detailed description on the selection criteria etc.) it is suggested to prepare and approve by relevant LAG-level decisive body (general assembly, board) a separate internal regulation(s) to describe the selection prosses. A suggested list for these regulations is:

1. Regulation to organize project calls, manage consultancy, submission and processing of applications (important procedures and deadlines);
2. Regulation of selection commission formation, rules of procedures of commission and rules of removal of the commission members from selection procedures;
3. Projects selection criteria and rules how the ranking of applications will be formed;
4. Regulation to arrange necessary preservation of all the documentations related to project applications, processing and selection;
5. Guidance documentation for project applicants, f.g. rules for tenders, voluntary work diary, rules to mark objects with Leader logos etc.

LAG needs to assure that the selection process of projects is transparent and all conflicts of interests according to the EC Regulation 1303 Article 34 between the applicants and commission members are avoided. In particular LAG selection commission member cannot participate in selection process if:

- The member of selection commission is applicant, the representative of applicant, family member or relative of the applicant;
- The member of selection commission has work, business or other relations with the applicant;
- The member of selection commission is related to the applicant in some other way or there are circumstances which can influence objective selection.

During the project applications processing the conflict of interests should be controlled by the LAG body responsible for applications processing. The member of selection commission have to inform the selection commission about the conflict of the interest in advance so that there is enough time to reorganize the selection if it's needed. Removed member of the commission should not participate in the whole selection process at this round where is the related applicant. LAG should have their own order document for selection of projects where all the requirements about the selection including the principles of removal of selection commission member are presented.

5. OBSERVATIONS, SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATION RELATED WITH BORJOMI, KAZBEGI AND LAGODEKHI DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

5.1 Results of the review of the Borjomi Local Development Strategy 2016-2020

Strategy gives a wide overview about the background of the LAG-area. The main structure of the strategy is well described with on aim and four related objectives, good intervention logic is proposed with the strategy with an attempt to set up a system of objective-related outcomes and indicators. It is evident that the main strategic components are developed in participatory manner. Special attention is paid on avoidance of conflict of interest.

For the further improvement of the strategy, following observations, suggestions and recommendations could be considered during the review of strategy:

- Strategy should involve an short introduction of the LEADER-methodology/CLLD-approach. This would raise awareness of the readers/implementers of the strategy and would be helpful to ensure the strategy's coherence with LEADER-principles. In this regard, the strategy should elaborate more how it meets the principles of co-operation and innovation;
- The description of the LAG-area could be involved in an annex of the strategy, whereas only a summary of the description is to be involved into the main part of the strategy;
- It is evident that LAG have put an effort into the attempt to prepare the strategy in a participatory manner. Sub-chapter 3.2.2 should involve an comprehensive overview about all the stakeholder involvement activities executed during the strategy preparation (and review) process with the description of involved stakeholder groups;
- The selection of some strategic objectives should more comprehensively justified – it remains unclear why only the development of agriculture is set as one of the objectives related to the local resources, not the usage of all the local resources (mineral water, forest) or other issues addressed;
- The activity plan, finance plan could be better connected with strategic objectives;
- Strategy should involve risk analysis and monitoring and evaluation (incl. strategy renewal procedures) as separate chapters, although some of the elements (indicators) are already present in the current strategy. The progress of the strategy implementation is easier to follow if the set objectives/indicators are connected with targets (and sub-targets);
- The project selection mechanisms should be more comprehensively elaborated – the connection of the measures with strategic objectives (please see the suggested

set-up in chapter 4.6), the composition of the project selection committee (the representativeness of different sectors);

- The mechanism for the avoidance of conflict of interest could be simplified – project-based approach could be more effective than an overall register;
- The need to describe (sub)projects' accordance with LEADER principles (especially innovation and co-operation) should be integrated into project application form. Project applicants should also describe how their project activities contribute into the strategy's targets – it eases the monitoring/evaluation of the strategy implementation;
- The need for an upper limit for the number of LAG members remains unclear, LAG should operate on the basis of open membership, only well-justified reasons should be used for member-exclusion;
- The knowledge and potential LAG has already gained are going to collect during the preparation and implementation and the strategy (as well from the inclusion into the GALAG) should be reflected in the strategy with the animation and development activities as well as capacity building of local actors performed by the LAG itself, the LAG structure and team should be in-line with this role and potential.

5.2 Results of the review of the Kazbegi Local Development Strategy 2016-2020

The strategy involves a very wide range of tasks to work with to ensure the sustainable development of the Kazbegi area, it is prepared (and LAG established) based on an inclusive approach and the LAG operates in an open-membership basis. Strategy involves a comprehensive overview about the background of the area and the description of the main development challenges and it is evidently prepared used inputs from additional research (incl. baseline study). Strategy introduces the background of the LEADER-methodology in it's introduction, the principle of co-operation is well integrated into the strategy – every tasks involves a list of co-operation partners.

For the further improvement of the strategy, following observations, suggestions and recommendations could be considered during the review of strategy:

- From the LEADER-principles, innovation is the least addressed issue in the strategy, the most suitable way to integrate it into the strategy would be to describe the innovative nature of the strategy as one of the cross-cutting priority sectors;
- The descriptive part as well as the strategic part of the strategy pays a lot of attention to the tourism potential of the area, but the extent of tourism-related stakeholders have been/are involved into the LAG activities (and strategy preparation) remains unclear;
- The selection of five strategic objectives and four priority sectors should more comprehensively justified. By now the table that includes all priority sectors, target

groups and expected results has a very wide focus and it is unlikely that LAG with it's resources (animation activities, support measures and sub-project support) can address them all and for that purpose the focus areas for the LAG activities should be chosen based on results of the SWOT-analysis using the suggestions for the intervention logic from chapter 4.1;

- Although the table that includes all priority sectors, target groups and expected results has a section whereas the indicators are listed, some of them are not in line with SMART-principle and no (realistic and measurable) targets are set;
- The strategy should involve more detailed description about the mechanism of application submission and selection process - steps that each applicant must go through in order for a project submission to be selected for grant funding. More information is needed about the expression of interest and full application;
- Although the strategy already involves some information about the role of the LAG, the description of the role, internal structure and procedures related with decision making and avoidance of conflicts of interests (including the procedures and decisions related with sub-grant allocation) should be elaborated more comprehensively. The knowledge and potential LAG has already gained are going to collect during the preparation and implementation and the strategy (as well from the inclusion into the GALAG) should be reflected in the strategy with the animation and development activities performed by the LAG itself, the LAG structure and team should be in-line with this role and potential.

5.3 Results of the review of the Lagodekhi Municipality Local Development Strategy 2016-2020

The strategy composition process is well described and justified, it gives a good overview how data collection provided input into the analysis what was a basis for the thematic SWOTs, the latter gave a good overview about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats by each sectors. The strategy involves a good overview about the LAG structure, decision making processes and procedures related with calls for proposals, it also sets LAG and LEADER promotion as on of the strategic objectives.

For the further improvement of the strategy, following observations, suggestions and recommendations could be considered during the review of strategy:

- Strategy should involve an short introduction of the LEADER-methodology/CLLD-approach. This would raise awareness of the readers/implementers of the strategy and would be helpful to ensure the strategy's coherence with LEADER-principles. In this regard, the strategy should elaborate more how it meets the principles of co-operation and innovation;

- strategy is highly oriented to support public sector activities compared with the role of public and third sector, the multi-sector approach as one of the key elements of LEADER-approach should be elaborated more;
- the set of thematic SWOT analysis give a good overview about the specific issues, but the strategy should benefit from the general SWOT as well which reflects the overall development issues and form a basis for the vision, strategic priorities and foreseen activities (support measures);
- the strategy proposes a large number of support measures LAG wants to address, but this approach in it's current format lacks internal coherence and focus and the expected results are not related with targets/indicators. During the strategy's review the proposed set of measures could be combined and supplemented with monitoring and evaluation activities following the suggestions from the chapter 4.5.