



European LEADER Association for Rural Development – AISBL

## European Rural Networks Steering Group<sup>1</sup>

Meeting 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2016, compiled by Kristiina Tammets

According to the agenda following topics were presented and discussed:

- Overview of the activities of the networks
- Capacity building related to RDP implementation and evaluation
- Thematic activities of ENRD Contact Point, EIP-Agri Service Point
- Assessing results of the European Rural Networks
- Upcoming events

All the presentations are available here <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/en-rd-events-and-meetings/4th-rural-networks-steering-group-meeting-20160304>

The main themes of the meeting were the capacity building and the exchange of experience. There is a lot of work involved to disseminate the results and messages from focus groups and sub-groups. It was emphasised that there is huge potential in strengthening the synergies between green economy and competitiveness of rural areas as well as building linkages between different actors at European and national levels.

### Capacity building in implementing LEADER/CLLD has to cover:

- Exchanges on multi funding;
- Explore simplified cost options (SCO) approaches from other programmes in order to use this knowledge in a better way for LEADER/CLLD;
- Cooperation projects workshops;
- Regional cooperation clusters development;
- Usage of ambassadors who can explain easily the most important issues regarding SCO, multifund, cooperation projects requirements, etc. Here is also possibility to bring knowledge to national or regional level from other countries, ENRD, etc;
- Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD – more examples were required, also information about different methods.

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<sup>1</sup> The European Rural Networks have a 3-level structure governing the ENRD and the EIP-network:

- Assembly – Strategic level - provides the strategic framework;
- Steering Group - Operational level - coordinates activities and thematic work;
- Sub-groups - Thematic work - several flexible sub-groups carry out the "substantial work" of the networks (knowledge development, knowledge sharing on specific topics), CLLD sub-group, Innovation sub-group and Evaluation sub-group.



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**Kristiina Tammets, president of ELARD, raised the following issues during the Steering Group meeting:**

- Many countries are developing IT systems for LEADER/CLLD delivery process. All LAGs and their strategies are different and there is a need to keep IT systems flexible and platforms opened for LAGs to design the system according to their own needs that also takes into account the capacity of the project applicants.
- There is a need to pay more attention to integration of LEADER delivery process elements. Project applications, selection of projects as well as evaluation and monitoring systems have to be interconnected to ensure the cohesion of LDS implementation.
- To get information directly from target groups EU wide umbrella organizations could collect necessary input from their members at national, regional and local level about what kind of capacity related to RDP and LDS implementation and evaluation is needed to improve.
- In order to evaluate the success of European Rural Networks it is necessary to measure what kind of proposals made by EU Rural Networks to European Commission have been implemented in real life. Impact indicators are important to define.

The Steering Group meeting could be summarized using A. Longo (Director for general aspects of rural development and research, DG AGRI) words “We need more direct communication with our target groups, also at grass root level and more attractive tools for that.”

It has been said that we can't solve all the problems during the current period. We already need to think about the changes of post 2020, and in 2016-2017 discussions about the next period will begin.

Self-evaluation of the European Rural Networks will be the main topic for the next Steering Group meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> of June. Other meetings are: 25<sup>th</sup> of October and the Assembly 1<sup>st</sup> of December. There is also planning of workshop dedicated to all 4 funds implementation in December.