

ELARD

Improving the quality of life
of rural areas through sustainable,
integrated local development



EUROPEAN LEADER ASSOCIATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

WHAT IS ELARD?



THE EUROPEAN LEADER ASSOCIATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT (ELARD) IS AN INTERNATIONAL NON-PROFIT MAKING ASSOCIATION (AISBL) SET UP TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN RURAL AREAS AND TO MAINTAIN THEIR POPULATION THROUGH SUSTAINABLE, INTEGRATED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT.

In doing so ELARD campaigns to spread the philosophy of the LEADER method both at a local grassroots and at an institutional level. ELARD believes that a sustainable rural development across Europe is best achieved by this methodology grounded on the following eight key features:

- Area-based approach
- Bottom-up approach
- Local public-private partnerships:
Local Action Groups
- Innovative approach
- Integrated and multi-sectoral approach
- Networking
- Cooperation
- De-centralised administration

ELARD brings together over 600 Local Action Groups established under the LEADER method and is committed to involving all stakeholders in local rural development.

The association supports its members directly in their efforts to carry out innovative work in the field of rural development and to network with each other in order to cooperate and disseminate good LEADER practises and know-how from one territory to another.

MEMBERS OF ELARD

ELARD REPRESENTS ITS MEMBERS IN EUROPE

ELARD represents the interests and needs of its members in front of other international, European, and national institutions.

ELARD is recognised by the DG Agriculture and Rural Development as the European Association representing the Local Action Groups at European level and has been admitted to the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD), as provided for under the new Rural Development regulation 1698/05, through participation in both the ENRD Co-ordination Committee and the LEADER Sub-Committee.

The association works actively to make the LEADER approach better known among the European decision-makers in order to maintain its position as an essential part of the European Rural Development Policy.

THE MEMBERS OF ELARD

ELARD was founded in Belgium in 1999 by the National LEADER Networks of Local Action Groups (LAGs) of France, Greece, Ireland, Italy and Spain.

At present, more than 600 Local Action Groups are involved either through their national or regional networks or as individual members. Today ELARD's members come from the following EU Member States: Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and United Kingdom.

ELARD is currently working on expanding its membership base even further, especially among the new Member States in an effort to create a culturally and nationally diverse front united by the common goal of a sustainable and viable rural Europe.

MEMBERSHIP AND FUNDING

ELARD is a non for profit association and is funded by membership subscriptions. The Association consists of Active, Associated and Observer members. The Active members are voluntary Networks of Local Action Groups at national or regional levels. Singular Local Action Groups may only be admitted in the event no LEADER network exists.

THE ASSOCIATION IS OPEN TO REPRESENTATIVE NETWORKS OF LOCAL ACTION GROUPS AND LEADER-TYPE ORGANISATIONS AS WELL AS ANY OTHER ENTITY WORKING TO PROMOTE THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ITS TERRITORY AND WHICH SHARES ELARD'S OBJECTIVES.





ELARD'S PRINCIPLES

ELARD STANDS FOR UNITING RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

All of the Local Action Groups in ELARD follow the LEADER method. However, many Local Action Groups are not funded by LEADER alone; more now manage a wide range of rural programmes.

In countries such as Ireland, Finland, Spain, Portugal and Greece, these Local Action Groups cover nearly all rural areas and are gradually becoming a much needed one-stop shop for delivering many policies to rural citizens.

ELARD BELIEVES THAT EVERY RURAL AREA SHOULD HAVE A LOCAL ACTION GROUP TO SERVICE ITS NEEDS. THEY ARE ALSO AN IDEAL TOOL FOR CO-ORDINATING MORE POLICIES IN THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL COHESION, COMPETITIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICIES.

ELARD STANDS FOR UNITING PEOPLE AND BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Even more important than joining up the policies - is joining up the people whose lives they affect. The LEADER method is unique among EU policies in applying the rule that at least half of the Local Action Group members must come from the local community. Through the Local Action Group Structure thousands of local people have an active role in the development of their rural area. On the board of a typical Local Action Group there are representatives of farmers, environmental organisations, women, young people, private firms, State Agencies and elected local authority members.

ELARD BELIEVES THAT THE LEADER METHOD CAN DEEPEN THE ENGAGEMENT OF ALL LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS.

ELARD STANDS FOR SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH FOR THE RURAL AREAS

ELARD is convinced that the LEADER methodology is an ideal tool for supporting the Europe 2020 Strategy aims in terms of “smart”, “sustainable” and “inclusive” growth. Thousands of Local Action Groups have demonstrated that applying the specific features of the LEADER methodology can help to find both innovative and environmentally and socially sustainable solutions for rural development and help mobilising the unique human, social, economic and cultural potential of rural Europe. In fact, bringing the LEADER approach to the use of the people of a new territory can work as an innovation in its own right.

Local Action Groups have instigated a new sense of optimism in the rural areas. They have been successful in creating and maintaining hundreds of thousands of jobs, leveraging in private investment, sparking off innovation and in animating

people to work voluntarily for the development of their territory. The LEADER approach has worked as a tool in encouraging young people and women to work in Local Action Groups as well as in improving the quality of life of different age and gender groups through the projects implemented. LEADER has built a new kind of confidence for the future and helped to slow down the rural exodus.

BASED ON THE GOOD EXPERIENCES OF ITS MEMBERS, ELARD STANDS THAT THE LEADER METHOD IS A HIGHLY COST-EFFECTIVE WAY OF SUPPORTING “SMART”, “SUSTAINABLE” AND “INCLUSIVE” GROWTH FOR THE RURAL AREAS OF EUROPE.

ELARD'S POSITION



ELARD BELIEVES THAT AT THE VERY LEAST ANY FUTURE EU RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY MUST INCORPORATE THE FOLLOWING COMPONENTS:

(1) A significant increase in resources for rural development and in particular for LEADER type measures which have a proven capacity to facilitate successful rural restructuring.

(2) A greater focus on exploiting and adding value of rural assets. The sustainable development of the rural economy is dependent on finding rural solutions to rural problems and should not be undermined by the importation of short-term urban generated solutions.

(3) A greater emphasis on promoting cooperation between the farming and non-farming rural communities. The sustainable restructuring of the rural economy requires all stakeholders working in partnership. EU policy must aim to facilitate and encourage this process and should avoid measures that promote competitiveness or conflict between rural interests (e.g. modulation).

(4) Recognition of the need for a new relationship between urban and rural areas, based on a better mutual understanding of the inherent value of each area and of their contribution and potential contribution to the wider society. This should include new measures aimed at attracting urban resources and entrepreneurship to promoting development in rural areas that is rural rather than urban in character.

(5) EU policy must attempt to better quantify the value of the contribution of farming and rural areas generally to the preservation of the landscape and biodiversity. The value to society of rural areas (biodiversity, recreation, air and water quality, food production, etc.) must inform the debate and discussion on the development of EU rural development policy and the role of landowners must be recognised accordingly.

(6) EU rural development policy must better develop and exploit synergies with other EU policies (e.g. Regional Policy, Energy, Social Cohesion, Enter-

prise/Tourism, Environment, Maritime Policy etc.) and such synergies should be better coordinated at EU level. All areas of EU policy should recognise the inherent value of rural areas to European society and should include measures to help realise and to protect this value.

(7) The LEADER approach, which has now been developed and refined over three programmes, has proven its capacity to bring about real sustainable development in rural areas, which is led by communities themselves. This approach must be at the centre of future implementation of EU rural development policy.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



“Think globally, act locally” says the well-known phrase. It is easy to say but more difficult to implement. Otherwise we wouldn’t be in the middle of the economic downturn in Europe right now. But the phrase can lead us back on the right track by mobilising the local level actors to produce services and products according to their comparative advantage and matching the demand patterns in global terms. The LEADER bottom-up local development method with its 20 years’ history has proved its capacity to boost this development. That is why it is crucially important that the method breaks through the EU’s traditional sector administration borders to wider European competition, innovation and regional policies.

LEADER is a child of rural development but the father comes from the development policy and participatory techniques side. The major strengths behind the method’s widely agreed success are flexibility and adaptability to the whole range of geographic, socio-economic

and political circumstances. It fits very well to sparsely populated areas in need of bring-

ing the resources together and finding new solutions - we have already heard the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Mr. Dacian Cioloş repeating three times in a short speech that LEADER will remain at the centre of the future Common Agricultural Policy. But LEADER also suits to other policy fields than rural development. Since 2007 we have already seen a successful extension to European fisheries policy/ DG Mare. At present the new European local development approach post 2013 is being designed in round table talks of DG Agri, DG Mare, DG Regio and DG Employment. The existing LEADER groups provide an experienced delivery mechanism. They must get prepared for a more influential role and thoughtfully choose those tools from the local development basket that best fit their areas’ needs.

“TOGETHER WE ARE DEFINITELY STRONGER!”

LEADER dissemination to new policy fields as well as totally new countries and

territories is a number one objective of the Finnish ELARD Presidency. The dissemination also gives reflections that help the method renew and evolve in the changing society. Improving the linkages with other European and international local development organisations assists in spreading the message. The EU already has more than 2 000 LEADER areas but ELARD and its members have also contributed to the method’s introduction in the EU candidate countries as well as in Russia, Africa and Latin America. The ELARD membership has been quickly expanding too, now covering 17 countries. Together we are definitely stronger! Be warmly welcome to join and actively take part in our global thinking and local acting!

PETRI RINNE

President of ELARD

THE AIMS OF THE FINNISH PRESIDENCY ARE:

- ▶ **Strengthening the LEADER method.** The Finnish Presidency aims to disseminate the LEADER methodology to new policy fields. The target policy fields are regional, urban, environmental, employment and development policies. ELARD will support the adoption of the model in rural and fishery policies, especially in the new member countries.
- ▶ **Development of the operational environment of LEADER.** The Finnish Presidency aims to restore the specific characteristics and the flexibility of LEADER as it faces the challenges emerging from the process of mainstreaming the methodology.
- ▶ **Expansion of ELARD's membership base.** There are 10 EU countries that

are not yet members of ELARD. The Finnish Presidency will work towards the goal of making stronger the voices of the Local Action Groups of Europe by gradually increasing ELARD' membership base.

- ▶ **Establishment of close contacts with all LEADER actors.** The Finnish Presidency wishes to make closer the cooperation with other LEADER actors (i.e. the 200 Fisheries Local Action Groups of EU), with sectorial organisations of rural development, with the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) and with rural researchers.
- ▶ **Promotion of the international cooperation of the LEADER actors.** ELARD will organize international LEADER networking events with the member organisations in order to facilitate launching of international LEADER projects.



THE FINNISH LEADER NETWORK WILL
HOST THE PRESIDENCY OF ELARD
FROM JANUARY 2011 TO DECEMBER 2012.

THE MEMBERS OF ELARD ARE:

- Association for zone development Medgidia - Romania
- AssoGal Toscana - Associazione dei GAL Toscani - Italy
- Cserhatalja - Hungary
- Ελληνικό Δίκτυο LEADER - Greece
- Fondation Rurale de Wallonie - Belgium
- Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) - Ireland
- The Coordination Council for LAGs Denmark - Denmark
- LEADER France - France
- Lietuvos Kaimo Bendruomenių Sąjunga - Lithuania
- Minha Terra - Federação Portuguesa de Associações de Desenvolvimento Local - Portugal
- Národní síť Místních Akčních Skupin České republiky, o.s. - Czech Republic
- Latvijas Lauku Forums - Latvia
- Red Española De Desarrollo Rural Redr - Spain
- Rural Aberdeenshire Local Action Group - United Kingdom
- Cairngorms Local Action Group - United Kingdom
- Rural Network Northern Ireland - United Kingdom
- Rural Tayside - United Kingdom
- Scottish Borders Council - United Kingdom
- Društvo za Razvoj Slovenskega Podeželja - Slovenia
- Małopolskiej Sieci LGD - Poland
- Suomen Kylätoimintary (SYTY) - Finland



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**ELARD HAS ESTABLISHED
PERMANENT OFFICES
IN BRUSSELS AT THE
FOLLOWING ADDRESS:**

Rue Saint-Laurent 36-38
B-1000 Brussels
Tel/Fax: +32 (0)2 230 13 53
E-mail: elard@elard.eu

For more information about ELARD,
the network members, contributions,
etc. visit our website:

<http://www.elard.eu>
