



Country report

**ASSESSMENT OF THE APPLICATION OF THE LEADER
APPROACH IN KOSOVO - "FROM A LOCAL
INITIATIVE TO A MAINSTREAM CONCEPT IN THE
RURAL AREAS"**

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6-7
June

2017

INTRODUCTION

- Kosovo is facing crucial challenges in developing a competitive economy, national policies and moving closer to the European Union (EU).
- Approximately 60 percent of the country's poor lives in rural areas and depends, directly or indirectly, on the agriculture sector for its livelihood.
- LEADER approach in Kosovo have been focused on the efforts to develop civil society and social dialogue within the rural population and facilitate good governance through local partnerships, foster employment and develop human capital.

METHODOLOGY

- A combination of desk research and field research was used.
- Desk research comprised a review of existing literature, empirical studies, reports published by the government bodies and other international organizations.
- The field work draws mainly on interview questionnaire to the main stakeholders.

LEADER IN THE NATIONAL STRATEGIC AND PROGRAM DOCUMENT

- The main principals of LEADER Approach have been built on the basis of ARDP 2007-2013 followed by ARDP 2014-2020.
- The support towards the implementation of local development strategies and application of measures 303 and 303.2 is built on the basis of the following supported laws such as: Law on Agriculture and Rural Development (03/L098), Law on 04/L090 Law on amending and supplementing the law no. 03-L-098 on agriculture and rural development (Article 1 and Article 5), Law 03/L040 on Self-Governance (Article 2 and Article 3), Law No.2004/2 on Gender Equality (Article 4), Law No. 03/L-13 on Freedom of Association in NGOs (Article 14), Law 04/L-074 On Agriculture and Rural Development Advisory Services (Article 2, Article 3 and Article 7).

LEADER SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives are focused on :

- Strengthening and building capacity of LAGs among rural inhabitants;
- Increase awareness on LEADER opportunities;
- Promote rural development through local initiatives and partnership; encourage the rural population to actively participate in LAG activities;
- Develop, organise and run LAGs;
- and exchange experiences and lessons learned between the LAGs.

LAGS IN KOSOVO

- According to ARDP 2007-2013, LAGs are registered as NGOs at the Ministry of Public Administration and they can apply for funding from different funds (not only LEADER support).
- They operate through their own management structures comprising a minimum of eight members of the steering committee proposed and approved by the general assembly.
- The main elements presenting the legal approach are focused on the main area-based local development strategies intended for well-identified sub-regional rural territories; Local public-private partnership; Bottom-up approach with decision-making power for Local Action Groups and Networking of local partnerships; and Implementation of innovative approaches.
- Currently 12 active LAGs.

LAG STRUCTURE

- LAGs in Kosovo consist of 25-30 members (coming from different fields, such as municipality representatives, local NGOs, farmers, business and voluntary experts from different fields) with a 50:50 share between public and private organizations or persons.
- Thirty percent of the board members are females in order to ensure the participation of rural women in local development processes.
- The communication, dissemination, promotion and information between LAGs and other rural stakeholders, is developed through the Rural Development Network (RDN).
- The support for the organizational development of selected LAGs in Kosovo is also delivered through Network of Organizations for Rural Development of Kosovo (NORDK).

FUNDING

- The funds directly supporting the LAGs are the National Funds of MAFRD (axis 4, measure 8).
- In 2011, 100,000 euros were allocated, in 2012 were allocated 200,000 euros, and in 2016 were allocated 375,375 euros.
- Funds were mainly allocated for the implementation of small and predefined investment projects but there was no EU funding (Leader / EAFRD) for LAGs.
- Projects from MAFRD funds are mainly small projects and do not provide opportunities for strategic development planning although these projects keep LAGs active.
- The operational costs for LAGs mostly rely on voluntary commitment of board members.

Financial allocation of funds for Measure 303

Year	Total eligible expenditure	Public expenditure							
		TOTAL		EU contribution		National contribution		Private contribution	
		EUR	%	EUR	%	EUR	%	EUR	%
1	2=3+9	3=5+7	4=3/2	5	6=5/3	7	8=7/3	9	10=9/2
2014	€ -	€ -		€ -	0%	€ -		€ -	
2015	€ 357,500	€ 357,500	100%	€ -	0%	€ 357,500	100%	€ -	0%
2016	€ 375,375	€ 375,375	100%	€ -	0%	€ 375,375	100%	€ -	0%
2017	€ 394,144	€ 394,144	100%	€ -	0%	€ 394,144	100%	€ -	0%
2018	€ 413,851	€ 413,851	100%	€ -	0%	€ 413,851	100%	€ -	0%
2019	€ 434,543	€ 434,543	100%	€ -	0%	€ 434,543	100%	€ -	0%
2020	€ 456,271	€ 456,271	100%	€ -	0%	€ 456,271	100%	€ -	0%
TOTAL	€ 2,431,684	€ 2,431,684	100%	€ -	0%	€ 2,431,684	100%	€ -	0%

Source: MAFRD, 2014.

A CASE STUDY ON LOCAL ACTION INITIATIVE IN VITI/A MUNICIPALITY

- The municipality of Viti/a is located in south-eastern Kosovo.
- It covers an area of approximately 276 km² and includes Viti/a town and 38 villages.
- The total population is approximately 47,000 (KAS, 2013).
- The economy of Viti/a municipality is mainly based on agriculture and small trade businesses.
- The Local Action Group "Vitia" in Viti/a was established on 2009 under the name "AGROVITIA".

IMPLEMENTATION

- The implementation of LEADER in Viti/a municipality was introduced "step by step" over several years since drafting local development strategies.
- The concept of the LEADER approach was promoted in Viti/a Municipality in the documents approving the Local Development Strategies and the Municipal Development Plan which represents the strategic planning and the financial programming document developed by a broad partnership that guides and stimulates the socio-economic development in accordance with the *National Development Strategy 2016-2021*.

THE APPROACH

The approach is defined by the following main priorities:

- Awareness and promotion activities on the LEADER approach;
- Improve cooperation between the municipality and the citizens;
- Design, implement and monitor local rural programs and policies;
- Utilize coherently local resources;
- Make coherent programs and use external support;
- Participation in seminars, workshops, meetings, study visits and other events organized by national and European RD networks;
- Develop and implement small-scale projects.

RESULTS

- In the period from 2009-2017, the LAG conducted several projects.
- The LAG in Viti/a managed to properly integrate multiple sectors (agriculture, tourism, environmental, marketing) to develop the local communities from the LAG's Viti/a.
- Most of the projects have been supported by municipality, GIZ, Helvetas and World Bank.
- The biggest project was the youth employability in rural area that started in 2016 and supported 50 incubator beneficiaries (poultry farmer, which was accompanied with training for the use of different equipment's), 50 hives and smokers, establishment of irrigation system for two members of the associations Women - "Lubisht" with 16 beneficiaries and "Sllatina Women" with 12 beneficiaries.

CHALLENGES

- Even though the LAG in Viti/a managed to implement well the small scale projects, delivers trainings and conduct a good information campaign through LAG project brochure and info-sheet series, the results examine that the LAG is still till in their initial stages of development, and there is too early for a comprehensive analysis of the impact of the LEADER programme on rural development in the region.
- The education level, project management ability, familiarity with the policy framework within which programmes such as LEADER are implemented, provide them with a privileged position of skillful liaison/mediator between the institutional framework of rural policies and local stakeholders in their respective municipalities.

CONCLUSION

Essential features of LEADER approach may be summarized in the following key observations:

- Limited capacities of LAGs (lack of human resources, project preparation/management skills, etc.)
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of awareness of local development strategies and the existence/role of LAGs
- Poor animation for the implementation of local development strategies acc. to the bottom-up approach
- No support for innovation due to a very limited list of eligible measures
- Lack of definition of the legal status of existing LAGs

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Capacity building in project management and the organization of local development processes is needed for LAG coordinators.
- Training should be supplemented by a broad awareness campaign for the general population.
- More financial support for the on-going administrative and organizational work of LAGs is important to activate the participation of locals and to ensure that LAGs are active continuously.

Thank you for your attention!