

Assessment of the application of the LEADER
approach in the Western Balkan Countries -
“from a local initiative to a mainstream
concept in the rural areas”
Draft report - Serbia

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06 June, 2017
Andrevlje, Serbia

MOTIVATION AND OUTLINE

- Overall objective:
 - To contribute to understanding of the current state and the barriers for effective implementation of LEADER initiative in Serbia
- Outline:
 - LEADER Environment in Serbia
 - LEADER in the national strategic and program documents
 - Institutional and legal settings
 - Funding
 - Previous Initiatives and Lessons Learned
 - Conclusions and Recommendations



LEADER ENVIRONMENT

LEADER in the national strategic and programming documents

- **SARD** - Priority area 12 „*Improving the social structure and strengthening social capital in rural areas*“
- **NPRD and NPA** for up to 2020 - are developed and are awaiting the adoption
- **IPARD II** - LEADER measure is planned for second package of accreditation.
 - Accreditation of the measures from the second package will be supported by EU project which is planned for the second part of the year 2017

LEADER ENVIRONMENT

LEADER in the national strategic and programming documents

- **Annual regulations** - the Secretariat of Agriculture, the Government of the AP Vojvodina; approved by MAEP
 - define the eligible activities, conditions and criteria for use of incentives as well as criteria for the approval of LSRD
- **Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society** in the Republic Of Serbia (2015-2019)
 - Prepared but not adopted
 - The overall objective of the Strategy is to improve the legal and institutional framework for the development of civil society and strengthen the partnership of the public administration and civil society in creating and implementing public policies

LEADER ENVIRONMENT

Institutional settings and relevant actors

- The rural development program, and therefore LEADER, is managed by the organizational units of the MAEP:
 - The department for rural development of the MAEP
 - The directorate for agricultural payments (DAP)
- Supporting partner institutions
 - National council for rural development - functioning as a monitoring committee,
 - National rural development network- focusing on support of local actions,
 - Agricultural extension service - promoting rural development schemes and advising beneficiaries
- Secretariat for Agriculture, Water management and Forestry
 - responsible for planning of support measures for the implementation of agricultural policy, educate and coordinate the work of local action groups on the territory of APV

LEADER ENVIRONMENT

*Institutional settings and **relevant actors***

- The Network for Rural Development of Serbia
 - officially established 2010 by support of MAEP as an umbrella association of associations active in the field of rural development of Serbia;
- The National LEADER Network
 - Established within EU project “Capacity building for the establishment and implementation of a LEADER initiative in the Republic of Serbia“ (2011-2013), collaborates with more than 20 Local Action Groups
- LAGs are not officially recognized by MAEP
 - applying for different projects independently or as a part of networks which operate in capacity of civil society networks.

LEADER ENVIRONMENT

Legal and regulatory requirements for the implementation of the LEADER

- *The Law on Agriculture and Rural Development*
 - provides the general framework for the policy implementation
- *The Law on Incentives in Agriculture and Rural Development*
 - Article 34 - predicts, among others, the subsidies for preparation and implementation of local Rural Development Strategies.
 - Article 40 - closely describes the incentives to support programs relating to the preparation and implementation of local rural development strategies.
- The missing parts of the regulatory framework:
 - the National program for rural development
 - bylaws regulating the definition of eligibility conditions for geographical scope of possible cooperation partners or condition for establishment of LAGs.

LEADER ENVIRONMENT

Secondary legislation related to LEADER approach

- *Law on Regional Development*
- *Law on local self-government*
- *Law on Associations*
- *Law on Public Private Partnership and concessions*
- *Law on non-governmental organizations - does not exist!*
 - LAG is a legal entity with two possible legal forms for local action groups:
 - Association (CSOs); and
 - A limited liability company - which operates as a non-profit business entity on the basis of declarations by a member

FUNDING

- The funding of LEADER like support measures from agricultural budget of Serbia
 - 2005-2010; linked to mapping of regions and trainings for identified NGOs on the topics related to PLA/PRA and rural development.
 - 2013 MAEP included LEADER measure in the annual Regulation for 2014, but call for proposal was not realized
- The budgete of APV
 - Since 2007,
 - The subject of the support was the award of a grant for the preparation of local rural development strategies.
 - Beneficiaries of funds were so-called Partnerships for Territorial Rural Development- potential Local Action Groups, from the territory of APV (15).
 - The total amount of funds allocated is 10,000,000.00, a maximum amount per beneficiary RSD 1,000,000.00 (approximately EUR 8.000)

FUNDING

- LEADER like activities were supported by donor projects:
 - **2008-2009 Project Strengthening Rural Social Capital and Networks** (UNDP Serbia) implemented in partnership with Provincial Secretariat of Agriculture, Water Economy and Forestry of AP Vojvodina, and funded by the Government of Romania
 - **2011-2013. Project LEADER Initiative Serbia** (LIS) - The project has contributed to strengthening the human, technical, organizational and financial capacities for the overall support to the implementation of LEADER approach within the MAFWM, but also to the development of 21 potential LAGs have been identified and granted.
 - **From 2009 through the support of the SWG and EC an EU funded project for support to application of Area Based Development Approach** started. This approach tested the LEADER type initiative on cross border areas in several territories (Drina- Tara, Drina- Sava and Pcinja region)

PREVIOUS INITIATIVES AND LESSONS LEARNED

- ***Case study: The continuity of policy support as the most important factor in achieving policy goals***
- *Executive summary*

Although the first activities of the MAEP on promotion and creation of local partnerships and their networks in Serbia were initiated more than 10 years ago, the funding scheme for LEADER like measure still is not the part of regular support for rural development. In meantime, local partnerships and networks formed through donor projects strive to maintain their activities, waiting for a finalization of the missing elements of regulatory framework. However, their position is not equal on the whole territory of Serbia – the LAGs on the territory of Autonomous Province of Vojvodina enjoy support from the budget of Provincial secretariat for agriculture, while these in Central Serbia are forced to rely on their own abilities to compete for grants.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

- ***Needs:***
 - Key institutions and stakeholders lack the knowledge, procedures, rulebooks, experience and understanding to make LEADER operational in Serbia.
- ***Challenges:***
 - *Institutional* – lack in staff to implement LEADER measure; lack of knowledge (design and implementation)
 - *Stakeholders* are not well prepared and informed about the rules and requirements of LEADER support; lack of understanding about possibilities and core principles of LEADER philosophy
 - *Technical challenges* - the support to animators and potential LAGs to prepare partnerships along with Strategies for submissions is needed

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

- *Institutional set up improvements:*
 - increase the number of staff and full fill the requirements of the accreditation process of PA respecting the work load analysis
 - to fill the planned positions for LEADER and to plan the staff which will be involved in the implementation of promotional and training activities and implementation of the measure
 - the training for evaluation of the Strategies of potential LAGs and general principles and rules for the implementation of the LEADER measure

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

- *Policy improvements*
 - all documentation and templates for implementation of the measure will have to be prepared prior to sending the request for accreditation of this measure under the IPARD II Programme
 - rulebook for implementation of the measure will have to be elaborated in line with EU requirements and in line with agreement with the PA staff
 - the National Programme for RD for LEADER type activities could boost process of awareness rising and help in fine tuning of documents needed for realization of LEADER measure in IPARD II Programme
- *Recommendation for the empowering local stakeholders*
 - the proper information about possibilities and core principles of LEADER philosophy will have to be transferred to potential stakeholder groups
 - Stakeholders should be equipped with well-designed trainings on skills and rules on LEADER requirements and procedures
 - strong information campaign to explain the rules and requirements is needed

Thank you!