

Second Meeting of the Regional Expert Advisory Working Group on LEADER

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Country report: Albania

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1. Policy background
2. Institutional settings and relevant actors
3. The legal and regulatory requirements for the implementation of the LEADER
4. Old initiatives
5. New initiatives
6. What next?

- (ISARD) 2014-2020 and Regional Development Strategy target unbalanced territorial development, rural depopulation and rising poverty.
- Government of Albania (GoA) efforts in updating the legal and institutional base in compliance with the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP)
- Need for more tailored support to local communities such as through LEADER initiatives.
 - The level of national policies little orientation on sustainable local community development.
 - IPARD Program II (71 million Euros till 2020) yet not designed LEADER measures

- (ISARD) 2014-2020, measure number 8: Preparation and implementation of local strategies for rural development - "Leader" approach –aim, processes, components, etc.
- IPARD II 2016-2020: Preparation and implementation of local development strategies – Leader approach;
 - study of situation, a measure is designed for LEADER and documentation package are presented to EC for assessment and revision
 - Potential acceptance of LEADER support ‘Preparation and implementation of local development strategies - LEADER approach expected after 2020
- Project “100 Villages” of Agency for Territorial Development urges for use of LEADER Approach

Recent initiatives

- Up to 10 LAGs will be established (covering 10 percentage of the rural area) through the LEADER Measure of the IPARD II - the indicative allocation is EUR 2.4 million
- Recently the World Bank Environment Service Project (ESP) initiated the piloting 3 LAGs (Puka, Has and Kolonje) focused on forest and pasture management (EuroPartners Development, 2019).
- Initiative on creating new or regulated LAGs are hampered by the postponement of draft law adoption
- Less than 10 million Euro mainly from foreign funding (interview with Gjeci).
- Donors: SNV, MADA, GIZ, Italian Co-operation, Swedish Government , OXFAM, etc.

1. National legislation that include normative acts and laws Law No. 9817, dated 22.10.2007 “On Agriculture and Rural Development” and the Law 139/2015 “On Local Self-Government”.
2. Common legal acts and agreements between EU and Albania including Framework Agreement and IPARD
3. EU legal documents including regulations regarding the Instrument for Pre-Accession and other regulations concerning the LEADER approach.
4. Draft Law “ON ORGANISATION AND FUNCTIONING OF LOCAL ACTION GROUPS” (drafted by the working group set up by DCM No. 151 dated 06.04.2018)

Gaps

- The draft law for the LAGs is not yet adopted (expected within 2019)

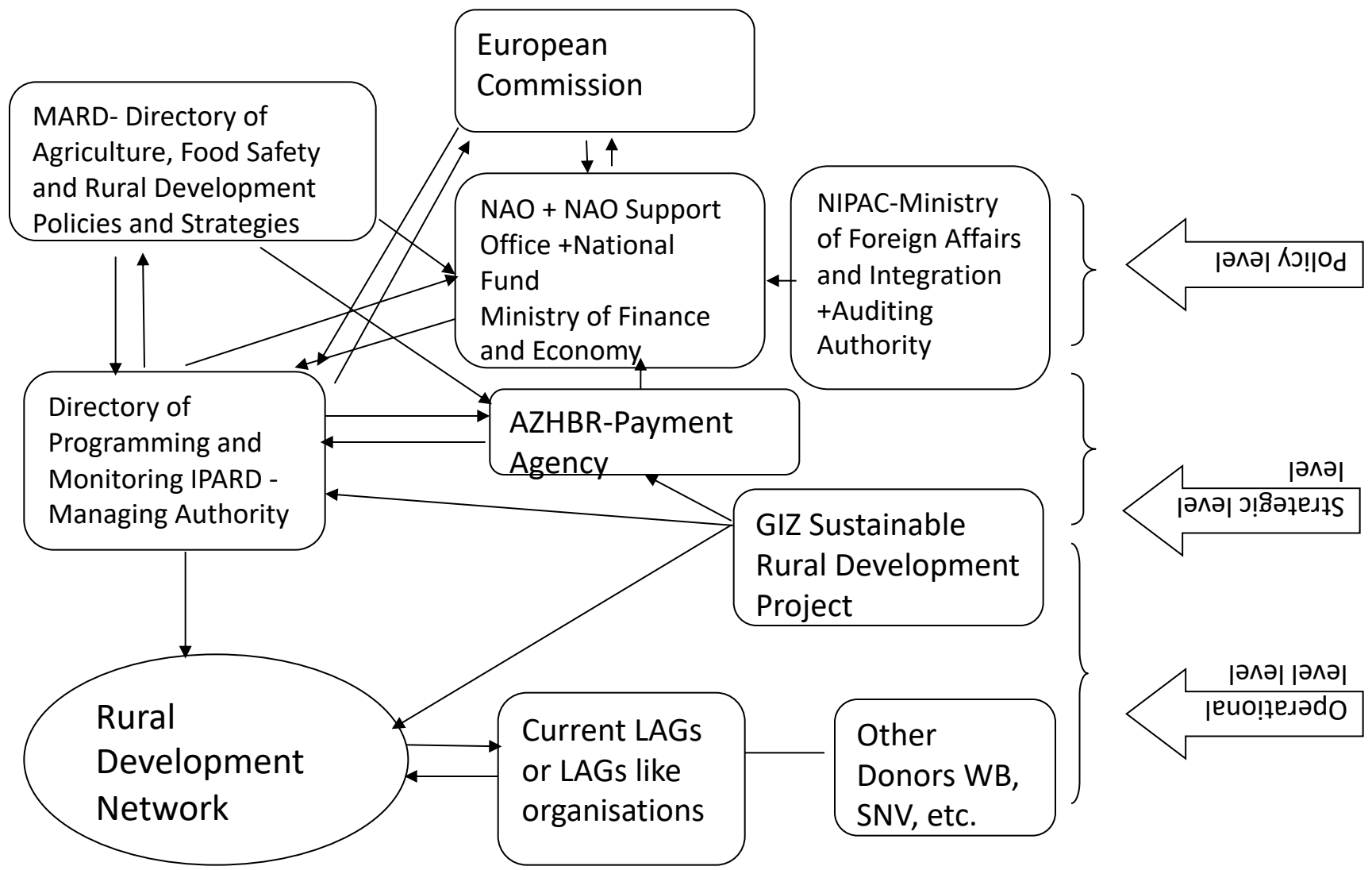
- MARD - Managing Authority (MA) responsibility rests on "implementation of local development strategies - LEADER approach and technical assistance."
- ARDA (AZHBR)– The Paying Agency will be in charge for the implementation of the LEADER measure.

SWOT Analysis

SWOT Table on LEADER implementation in Albania

	Individual Capacities/Competences	Capacities of Organisations	Society	
	Competence development	Organisation development	Development of cooperation systems	Development of enabling frameworks
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High number of competent people in intermediary agencies The experience at Local Government Unit with the frequent reforms has increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A major part of LAG like organization has the capacity to easily transform into the LAG Civil Society organizations are expanded and their capacity to manage is increased. In the recent three years other 3 LAG like organizations are established from WB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil Society organization's are more prone to networks. Albanian Network for Rural Development & other LAG like organizations create basis for cooperation. The design of implementation of local development strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ISARD 2014-2020 provides proper basis for LEADER Development Increase role of IPARD in preparing the main institutional capacities. Law 'For NPO', and 'On the Registration of NPO' can be used for creating IAGs
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low number but very competent people in the MARD Capacity building at LAGs like organization is useless since there is staff movement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No constant financing for LAG like maintenance and nor for LAG creation except few initiatives. The number of NGOs although is high (1800) is not present in peripheral areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business community is not prepared and ready. Majority of former networking structures are not existing or formally existing Public Chambers of Commerce are functional only in some areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current financing schemes do not provide any funding for local initiatives Law on LAG is yet not adopted. Capacity building at local level is still limited. Advisory services packages are overloaded with other tasks. The Municipalities have yet not a clear understanding of the CLLD/LEADER opportunities
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an increasing awareness at civil society organizations on the LAG, The integrated Rural Development Program +100 has raised rural people attention on bottom up movements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MARD and Payment Agency resources are increasing due to capacity building and investments by Donors IPARD II measure on capacity building is expected to bring Measure 9 on capacity building and Measure 5 on LEADER 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strengthening of Municipalities governance bring as well as the strengthening of community development organizations bring a fertile environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a high willingness of Donor project Therefore, there are plenty of potential areas/products and social capital hot-spots to further development. Promising legal base
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The high migration from rural areas depletes the available human resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IPARD measures relevant to LAG creation may need time to be implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The vertical cooperation is weak. There is a decreasing trust on participatory approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The principal motivation of agricultural and rural development policies are yet motivated into increasing competitiveness.

Diagram of actors and responsibilities for preparation of LEADER



Priorities for developing LEADER system

	Respective priorities set by the stakeholders for developing the LEADER system at three levels	Comments from the national expert...	
		...concerning the effectiveness and efficiency of the actual or planned delivery system	...concerning the implementation of the LEADER method (8 features)
...by public authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare the legal base and send for approval within September 2020 • Prepare budgeting for promotion activities to be carried during year 2021 • Prepare training materials for capacity building activities on LEADER development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Law on LAGs to be approved by Parliament 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is similar with Decentralised managing and financing approach
...by networks and intermediary agents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare Measure 5 Draft within 2020 • Draft Capacity Building Programme for Potential LAGs • Draft Terms of Reference for Capacity Building to Prepare for Implementing LEADER Measure in Albania • Create terms of work for ARDA and Evaluation Committee • Determine the rules for funding (budgeting, disbursement, control) and monitoring and evaluation • The manual for assessing compliance and eligibility • Define with MARD approval the members of Evaluation Committee • Open of the call for proposals • Prepare process of selection for the LAGs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure is drafted and sent for comments in DG Agri • Currently is being prepared Entrusted Budget Implementation Task which is planned to be finalized in end of June 2020 • Is expected to be done a modification of IPARD II and this measure is planned to be approved by Monitoring Committee in December (to be met twice per year). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative measures can be linked with 100 Village program in order to scale up financing decisions at LAG level. Area based approach can be strengthened
...by LAGs and local actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare project proposals for studying LAG potentials at regional level • Send project proposals to EU and other donors for capacity building activities • Advocate and participate to meetings for Measure 5 consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAG creation might be slow due to limited capacities in local 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The networking function is expected to be enhanced throughout all LAGs. The bottom up approach should be emphasized at TOR for subcontractors

Processes	Action	Responsible actor and other contributing actors	Output	Date	Comment
1.1	• Draft LAW preparation, circulation to other Ministries and adoption at Parliament	• DAFSRDPS	• Law in the official Gazette	• Within September 2020	• Law is being prepared to be sent to the parliament. Legal assistance is required.
1.2	• Plan budgetary expenditures for LAG awareness raising campaign	• DAFSRDPS	• Budget plan	• Within April 2021	• Budgetary planning is carried in the first quarter
1.3	• Finalize the preparation of training sessions	• DAFSRDPS	• Training materials	• Within December 2021	• Donor support will be required
1.4	• Prepare the IPARD Measure 5 for consultation and communication and Entrusted Budget Implementation Task	• DPM IPARD	• Done	• End of June 2020	• Ongoing process
1.5	• Prepare and send for certification to DG Agri the Measure 5 package	• DPM IPARD through NAO	• Measure 5 final version	• First quarter of 2021	• If included in the current IPARD program
1.6	• Audit of capacities, memorandum of understanding between Managing authority and Paying Agency	• DG Agri	• Report	• May 2021	• If included in the current IPARD program
1.7	• Updating of Financial Agreement	• DG Agri	• Financial agreement updated	• September 2021	• If included in the current IPARD program
1.8	• Draft Capacity Building Programme for Potential LAGs	• DPM IPARD	• Capacity Building Program package	• December 2020	•
2.1	• Draft Terms of Reference for Capacity Building to Prepare for Implementing LEADER Measure in Albania	• DPM IPARD	• Terms of reference	• December 2020	•
2.2	• Create terms of work for ARDA and Evaluation Committee	• DPM IPARD	• Terms of work	• December 2020	•
2.3	• Determine the rules for funding (budgeting, disbursement, control) and monitoring and evaluation	• DPM IPARD	• Rules for funding final draft	• December 2020	•
2.4	• The manual for assessing compliance and eligibility	• ARDA	• Manual	• December 2020	•
3.1	• Animation, awareness rising and promotional activities	• DPMIPARD	• Awareness raising campaign start	• January 2021- June 2021	•
3.2.	• Open call for recognition of LAG	• ARDA	• Date of call for proposal made public in the ARDA website	• September 2021	•
3.3	• Training of potential LAG Staff	• ARDA through subcontracted services	• Training materials	• November 2021	•
3.4	• Preparation of Local Development Strategies for each LAG	• ARDA through subcontracted services	• Subcontracting entities	• November 2021	•
3.5	• LAGs recognition and approval of relevant LCD strategies	• DPMIPARD and ARDA	• LAG list made public at ARDA website	• December 2021	• Formerly created LAGs will apply again for eligibility.

Conclusions

- MARD has been making efforts to revise the overall policy framework
- The overall aim of this assignment is to facilitate the process of setting up structures and delivery mechanisms for the LEADER measure
- This report is a synthesis of a collaborative work carried
- Despite continual depletion of rural areas governing capacities, there has been taken weak steps to develop policies which enhance a bottom up engagement of rural stakeholders.

Thank you for your attention!

