ÉIRE2026.EU
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Uachtaránacht na hÉireann ar Chomhairle an Aontais Eorpaigh 2026
Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2026

European Commission

High-level Rural Policy Forum

Europe's Rural Future - Responding to rural priorities through integrated national and regional strategies and LEADER

RURAL PACT

Stronger rural communities: The added value of LEADER/CLLD Europe

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RURAL NEEDS

01 Persistent regional disparities across Europe

02 Pressure on farmers, fishers and coastal areas

03 Rural–urban socio-economic gaps

04 Low and volatile incomes

05 Barriers to renewal

06 Barriers to access to capital

&

EMERGING PRESSURES

01 Climate and environmental risks

02 Unfair global competition

03 Geopolitical instability

04 Migration pressures

05 Digital and technological change

06 Higher energy prices

RURAL CONTEXT · LOCAL NEEDS MEET EMERGING PRESSURES

THE PROPOSED EU FUND: ONE FUND, ONE NRPP PER MEMBER STATE

POLICY AREAS IN THE FUND

- Cohesion policy
- CAP and rural areas
- Fisheries and maritime
- Social policy
- Migration and security

ONE FUND

ONE NRPP

for each Member State

National and Regional Partnership Plan

PLAN STRUCTURE

National and sectoral chapters

Regional and territorial chapters

where relevant

LEADER/CLLD: an approach that builds local capacity to act together

MORE THAN 30 YEARS OF PARTICIPATORY LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

A European network of local development actors is already in place.

Funding arrangements have changed over time. The participatory method has persisted: local people and organisations identify needs, agree priorities and work together.

2,768 LAGs in 2023–27

The relationships, knowledge and experience built through this network are a development asset for the next programming period.

LEADER'S ADDED VALUE WORKS THROUGH THREE CONNECTED DIMENSIONS

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Builds relationships, cooperation and skills across local actors.

LOCAL AND MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE

Supports shared priorities, coordination and local decision-making.

BETTER RESULTS & IMPACTS

Enables more locally adapted, integrated and durable responses.

Together, these capacities can contribute to stronger rural communities: connected, inclusive and better able to adapt.

LEADER in environmental resources and renewable energies

STANDARD PROJECT	WHAT LEADER ADDS	PROJECT EXAMPLE | LAG / MEMBER STATE
A **pre-established problem.**	**SOCIAL CAPITAL** Local advice and learning help residents compare solutions.	**LET'S CLEAN THE WATER** **LAG Škofja Loka Hills, Slovenia** Informed 2,600 residents and tested four small wastewater systems.
One **applicant** one **project.**	**LOCAL GOVERNANCE** The LAG brokers links among farmers, businesses, experts and authorities.	**BIOGAS FROM CATTLE MANURE** **LAG Pays des Condruses, Belgium.** Mapped farm potential and explored cooperative biogas solutions.
Support focuses mainly on the **funded activity or asset**.	**SOCIAL CAPITAL + GOVERNANCE** Shared equipment and local partners organise landscape care.	**RESIDUAL WOOD** **LAG Meetjesland, Belgium** Around 25 partners and sponsors helped establish a shared woodchipper.
One action one sector.	**BETTER RESULTS & IMPACTS** Water, energy, organic production and inclusive jobs are linked.	**UTOPIA SPACE** **LAG Terras de Sicò, Portugal** Combined water and energy savings, organic production and inclusive jobs.
Replications normally require additional projects.	**RESULTS + CAPACITY** Mentoring develops ideas and a model that can be repeated.	**VIELFALTER** **LAG Nationalpark OÖ. Kalkalpen, Austria** 55 ideas submitted; eight received awards, mentoring or business support.

Water, energy, resource use and local enterprise: the same method creates ad hoc territorial responses.

LEADER in food chains and risk management

STANDARD PROJECT	WHAT LEADER ADDS	FOOD CHAIN EXAMPLE | LAG / MEMBER STATE
A **pre-established type of beneficiary.**	**SOCIAL CAPITAL** Brings growers, a school and an agritourism business into one short chain.	**SHORT FRUIT CHAIN** **LAG Southwest Satu Mare, Romania** Four **fruit growers** worked with a **school** and an **agritourism guesthouse** to build a local market and short chain.
Targets a specific output, asset or stage of the supply chain.	**SOCIAL CAPITAL** Builds continuing links between restaurants and local suppliers.	**PAYS GOURMAND** **LAG Pays A3V, France** A **shared quality label linked restaurants with local suppliers**; later extended across three territories.
Can support modernisation within a farm or company.	**LOCAL GOVERNANCE** Seven LAGs coordinate enterprises, schools and local partners.	**FAIR TRADE ECONOMIC DISTRICT** **7 LAGs, Lombardy, Italy** The project engaged around **200 enterprises and developed local labels, short chains and food education**.
Often operates within a defined project or beneficiary area.	**TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE** LAG cooperation links local producers with urban buyers and markets.	**ARAGON + FRANCE–PORTUGAL, Spain, France and Portugal** **20 Aragon LAGs** coordinated outlets; Pays du Mans and ADREPES exchanged approaches for canteens and restaurants.

Wider results compared to standard interventions and innovative solutions compared to BAU

LEADER in rural social services and social resilience

STANDARD PROJECT	WHAT LEADER ADDS	PROJECT EXAMPLE | LAG / MEMBER STATE
Infrastructure and service delivery may be funded separately.	**MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE** LEADER facility investment connects with ESF-supported services.	**REVĂRSAREA COMMUNITY PROJECT** **LAG Dobrogea de Nord, Romania** LEADER renovated a former cinema; ESF support launched two social centres serving 100+ children and families
Targets a specific group or service.	**SOCIAL CAPITAL** Intergenerational activities build ties and address reported loneliness.	**THE HAPPY BUNCH** **LAG Katri ry, Finland** and **LAG Srce Slovenije, Slovenia** Weekly activities brought seniors and nursery children together; participants reported less loneliness
Delivers support during a defined project period.	**SOCIAL CAPITAL + GOVERNANCE** A local plan informs ongoing support; the organisation later adapted during COVID.	**ERRIGAL–TRUAGH / WISE AND WELL** **LAG Monaghan, Ireland** A LEADER-funded plan informed services; during COVID, the organisation delivered meals and care packages. 600+ older people later attended the club.
Treats social inclusion separately from local economic activity.	**INCLUSIVE RESULTS & IMPACTS** Work, learning and shred spaces are organised around inclusion.	**GARTENHOF WAIERN** **LAG Region Mittelkärnten, Austria** An inclusive organic farm added a shop and a 120 m^2 learning space, supporting activities, employment and income.

From accessible services to social ties and local capacity to respond to change.

LEADER-CLLD builds stronger rural communities

01

CONNECT

A **European network of local development actors**, built over more than **30 years**.

02

BRIDGE GAPS

LEADER works where standard funding schemes fall short, creating **synergies** across sectors and rural areas.

03

BUILD CAPACITY

LEADER is a **development process** that continues beyond individual funded projects.

NEXT PROGRAMMING PERIOD

Invest in social capital, multilevel governance and better outcomes.

Together, these capabilities help communities sustain services, widen participation and adapt to change.