

The evolution of the LEADER approach in the Republic of Moldova

The implementation of the LEADER approach in the Republic of Moldova has started in 2016, when the first 8 LAGs were created. Later, this mechanism was taken over as a rural development model solution to improve living conditions and ensure inclusive economic growth in the rural areas of the Republic of Moldova.

LEADER as an approach is adaptable and dynamic. Being a process that seeks constant improvement, LEADER requires reinforcement and optimisation at both local and national levels in order to deliver the added value. Therefore, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry in Moldova and the Agency for Intervention and Payments in Agriculture support LAGs to enable this renewal and enhance local development. The large-scale implementation of local community projects by LAGs has revitalized rural regions and stimulated the development of a legal framework, which has enabled the adjustment of the LEADER approach to the local context and the launch of the LEADER Program, which is managed with national funds. This positions the Republic of Moldova as the first and currently the only country outside the European Union to implement the LEADER approach as a public policy instrument for rural development.



Photo caption: The process of creating the Cismeaua Caprioarelor LAG.

Photo credit: the National LEADER Network

Key Partners in the implementation of the LEADER approach



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Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry of the Republic of Moldova. As of June 2022, the LEADER approach has been scaled up to a national level through the implementation of the LEADER Program that is launched by the **Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry of the Republic of Moldova.** Thus, LAGs will receive grants of up to 5% from the National Fund for Agriculture and Rural Development, managed by the Agency for Payments and Intervention in Agriculture (APIA). In 2022-2023, 37 LAGs (out of 48 existing LAGs) will benefit from Government financial support in value of approximately 9 million Euro, as part of the LEADER Program.

REȚEAUA NAȚIONALĂ
LE LEADER
REPUBLICA MOLDOVA

The National LEADER Network (NLN) was created in 2018, with the support of MAFI and the European Union and acts a **guarantor of the implementation of the LEADER mechanism** in the Republic of Moldova. The network represents the interests of LAGs and creates favourable conditions for their interaction and development, by establishing partnerships at the local, national and international levels. As of April 2019, NLN became part of the European Association for Rural Development LEADER (ELARD).


Solidarity Fund PL
in Moldova

Solidarity Fund PL in Moldova. Working with central authorities and local partners to implement systemic changes at the local and national levels, SFPL in MD stimulated the development of a legal framework that enabled the LEADER approach to be adjusted to the local context and implemented on a large scale through the LEADER Program. In addition, SFPL in MD contributed to the creation of the National LEADER Network as a guarantor of the process, while also financing LAGs' activity and the implementation of the Local Development Strategies.



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LEADER IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The LEADER approach is a European Union initiative to revitalize rural areas and support rural development projects, initiated at the local level. The idea of LEADER is to engage the energy and resources of people and local organisations as development actors, empowering them to contribute to the future development of their rural areas by forming area based Local Action Group (LAG) partnerships between the public, private and civil sectors. The implementation of the LEADER approach in the Republic of Moldova started in 2016 and has been supported by many development partners including the European Union, Polish aid, USAID and EU member states such as Romania, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and others.

LEADER in Moldova follows a **bottom-up approach**, meaning that the local community and local players are involved in every stage throughout the process of defining a development pathway for their area, that is consistent with their needs, expectations and plans. The involvement of local actors is fair and transparent including the population at large, economic, civic and social interest groups and representatives of public and private institutions. Implementing LEADER through a collective approach with delegated decision making enables local people to take charge of their own area's future. They make decisions about the local strategy and the selection of the priorities to be pursued.

Key development partners
of the LEADER approach
in Moldova



Funded by
the European Union



Polish aid



Main pillars

TERRITORY. The LEADER approach is implemented on a specific area, formed of several neighbouring communities that have the potential and the local resources to advance local development. The area involves a small, homogenous, socially and functionally cohesive territory, characterised by common traditions, a local identity and a sense of belonging or common needs and expectations.

Having such an area focus enables the local partnership to work together to identify and address local strengths, challenges and opportunities, mobilising the area's endogenous potential and resources. Thus, following an **area-based approach**, the funding targets the priorities of the area as a whole, not specific projects or groups of projects.

LOCAL ACTION GROUPS. The main actors of the LEADER approach are the so-called Local Action Groups (LAGs), which represent institutionalized partnerships between representatives of the public, private and civil society. Following a **partnership-based approach**, LAGs ensure a well-balanced, structured and broadly representative governance mechanism that acts in the best interest of the local people. To ensure a fair decision-making process, no one sector can represent more than 49% of the membership of the local partnership.

Involvement in the partnership means that the people become active partners and drivers of their area's development. Partnerships fit their area and the realities of their local context recognising that it takes time, effort and commitment to build the necessary trust and working relationships.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES (LDS). Exploring the needs and opportunities of the area, LAGs develop local development strategies that aim to capitalise on the links between local sectors and exploit the potential multiplier effects. The document describes the shared vision, priorities and directions of development identified by the LAG, as well as specific activities and investments it wants to carry out on its territory. Following an **integrated multi-sectoral approach**, LAGs make choices and focus on those objectives and actions that add value to existing opportunities and scale up innovation and change at the local level. Thus, the actions and projects contained in local strategies are linked and coordinated as a coherent whole.

THE MAP OF LOCAL ACTION GROUPS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

LEADER approach in numbers

LAGs	48
Rural communities	745
Rural areas covered	50%
Local projects implemented by 2021	850
Local projects in process of implementation	250

The timeframe of LAGs' creation

	2017 – 2019 (32 LAGs)
	2021 – 2022 (16 LAGs)
	National borders
	District borders
	The administrative limits of cities with a population of over 10 thousand people (year 2014)

