



Leader France's twentieth anniversary seminar

Strasbourg, 13th & 14th of September 2017

20 ans d'actions au service de LEADER

LEADER France is a place for LAGs to reflect and meet in an independent way. It is the only network committed to defending LEADER fundamentals and a programme management as efficient as possible. As a member of numerous national and European authorities, the federation is a well-known partner. This is the result of a fruitful commitment of many official representatives and technicians over the years.

As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of LEADER while the European Commission has announced the release of its final CAP renewing proposal in November 2017, LEADER France organised a large LEADER seminar for its 20th anniversary, right at the heart of the European Union in Strasbourg. This event was the opportunity to take a look back at the history of LEADER and think about the future prospects of the programme while incorporating the characteristics that make the spirit of LEADER, networking, partnership, dissemination, conviviality.

Almost 200 participants were able to exchange and debate on the place of LEADER and also the one of LEADER France during the last 20 years, while addressing the future rural development policy of the European Union after 2020. This seminar gathered a variety of actors of the LEADER approach in France and Europe: French and European LAG representatives (Romania, Poland, Latvia, etc.), French partners (Ministry of Agriculture, Association of French Mayors, Association of Rural French Mayors, Association of French Regions, General Secretariat for Territorial Equality, Payment Agency, Management Authority members), European partners (ELARD, ENRD, RED), members of the European Parliament.

Programme: panel discussions, theatrical performance, visit of the European Parliament, discovery of Strasbourg by boat, casual diner, visit and discovery of project in Alsace area and dissemination of good practices.

Leader France's twentieth anniversary seminar

Highlight of the 20th anniversary seminar, the debate entitled “LEADER France inside, looking back and forward to the evolution of the federation and to the approach engaged by LEADER France since 1997”, has gathered several great witnesses of LEADER France's action. This debate was the opportunity to review the 20 years of action of the Federation of rural areas involved in the LEADER approach and to appreciate the evolution and importance of LEADER.



Yves CHAMPETIER, European Network for Rural Development, former director of the European LEADER Observatory

The actors:

Jean-Paul STORAI, Former director of the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development in Hérault Departmental Council

Thibaut GUIGNARD, President of LAG Saint-Brieuc / LEADER France

Karine FARINEAU, Director of the LAG Sud Vendée

The 20th anniversary of LEADER France was the opportunity for all attending representatives to review the history of the Federation of LAGs and that of the LEADER programme, and express their vision of the programme with respect to rural areas.

Speaking about LEADER France is about discussing the involvement of LAGs in the Federation. For 20 years, LEADER France has been an independent meeting and reflection place for LAGs. It is recognised as the only network dedicated to defend the fundamentals of LEADER and a programme management as efficient as possible. This recognition is the result of a fruitful and long lasting involvement of many elected officials and technicians over the years.

Speaking about LEADER France implies to talk about Europe. LEADER France has always focussed on the necessity to promote the European dimension of the programme through cooperation for instance, but also through the creation of ELARD, of which LEADER France is a funding member as reminded by Jean-Paul Storai et Yves Champetier, two historical figures of the federation.

Speaking about LEADER France, it's also talking about rurality and rural actors as highlighted by Vanik Berberian: “At some stage, we will have to become aware that the French territory lives with rural areas and that these areas are not only made of farmers, but also other persons who hold an incredible development potential. What needs to be changed is the way we look at rurality. LEADER France attempts to change this look on rurality. It has allowed rural areas to gain confidence. The country needs rural areas.” For twenty years the federation has strived to promote a vibrant rurality and defend the LEADER programme in favour of rural areas through the creation of numerous partnerships, as highlighted Agnès Le Brun: “We were going to make rural areas heard, which are the most threatened in this vast programme”.

Speaking about LEADER France, it is also about mentioning its role in the promotion of successes and as a relay to voice difficulties faced locally. “The Commission likes to say that it is one of the most beautiful successes of the European Union, along with Erasmus” asserted the Ministry. However “In the 2000's the dream of 'Leaderising' the mainstream faced political and administration burden” recalled Yves Champetier. LEADER France successively played a role of advisor and claimant, as stated by Jean-Paul Storai, and a role of spokesman for rural areas such as during the publication on the Balny report, as reminded by Karine Farineau, director of the LAG Sud Vendée. As concluded by Thibaut Guignard “The historical accounts and testimonies heard are important. During this post 2020 negotiation period everything must be done to go back to the fundamentals of LEADER.”

Theatre actors quotes from a comic performance staging a control of the action of LEADER France “I'm not controlling the papers only, I'm also controlling passion and you seem truly passionate to me. Congratulations! The mandate of LEADER France is renewed for many years more!”.

THEY SAID :



Tibor SZANYI

“In spite of shortcomings we have observed during the past years, I think LEADER touches the heart and soul of rural communities. No matter what LEADER may have sparked off, your are good foundations for the future”.



Vanik BERBERIAN

“You have the two essential components. The first one is passion, one cannot work on this topics without passion and the second one is method. »



Yves CHAMPETIER

“I wish as much creativity to reinvent a new rural Europe in the next 20 years. LEADER is a programme of innovation that speaks to communities”.



Jean-Paul STORAI

“LAGs are the true innovation of LEADER. What was built is still alive”.



Thibaut GUIGNARD

“The historical account is important. It is necessary to go back to the fundamentals, perhaps under a new simplified model”.

THEY SAID :



Eric ANDRIEU

« It is necessary for the LEADER programme to be maintained, in one form or another, and to go back to the foundations of the 1991 community initiative programme, with procedures as ground-based as possible. »



Jean-Paul DENANOT

« There is a strong willingness for rurality to stay alive. LEADER France and LEADER programmes have had an important role to play in order to keep this rurality alive. »



Michel DANTIN

« Succeed in 2014-2020, in order to pool arguments to defend LEADER. We share the same struggle and we need arguments about rurality as you face at local level. »



Gérard PELTRE

“If you want to have satisfying returns from European level, it is necessary to inspire them”.



Kristiina TAMMETS

“It is necessary to build upon the potential developed by LAGs over the past 25 years. LEADER plays an important role by linking communities across Europe”.



Alexandra CATALAO

“The Commission wants to maintain a strong rural development policy but with different patterns”.

Seminar Tacking actions in favour of LEADER post 2020

As this participative rural development programme celebrates its quarter of century, time is well-chosen to talk about LEADER and its future. Time is even better chosen since we are currently beginning to discuss the next programming period of the Common Agricultural Policy and all other European funds for 2020-2027 programming period. This is why the debate entitled “*European rural development policy and the place of LEADER questioned*” allowed to raise questions on this topic with the participation of several great witnesses and actors.

Great witnesses:

Eric ANDRIEU, Member of the European Parliament, Member of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

Jean-Paul DENANOT, Member of the European Parliament, Member of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

Michel DANTIN, Member of the European Parliament, Member of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

Gérard PELTRE, President of the Association Rurality-Environment-Development (R.E.D)

Actors:

Kristiina TAMMETS, President of ELARD

Alexandra CATALAO, DG AGRI – European Commission

Alexandre CASSARO, Regional Councillor of the Grand-Est Region, representative the Association of the French Regions

Frédéric MARCOS, President of the LAG Pays Adour Landes Océanes, Leader France

This great debate allowed for different visions of the future European rural development policy to be presented and for the future of LEADER to be put into perspective.

All actors agreed on the necessity for another rural development programme to be implemented in the post 2020 programming period as mentioned by Eric Andrieu “*I cannot assure you, nonetheless it is a necessity. It is necessary for the approach to be maintained in one form or another*”.

The debate on the future of LEADER focussed mainly on form: “*The Commission is willing to pursue an important rural development policy but under another model*”. As reminded by Alexandra Catalao.

Regarding the form, there are two issues: one is about budget, whereas the other one is about choosing which European policy the approach will be part of. On budget matters, Jean-Paul Denanot highlights: “*We have to fight for the CAP, 1st and 2nd pillar together. The budget needs to be maintained around 40% of the overall European budget, which is not acquired yet*”. Michel Dantin recalled: “*I was once surprised during the last programming period as I discovered that the debate on LEADER in different countries was still going on. We have to remember that the British bring a net contribution to the budget. It is about knowing the amount that will be covered by contributing countries and knowing the cuts*”.

According to Gérard Peltre, the questions on budget matters and the choice of the policy are linked: “*Means must be claimed but proposals must also be made. In order to go forward both means and memory are needed. We must therefore show that is profitable to invest in rural areas*”.

On the policy question, Michel Dantin said: “*Some would like to merge EAFRD and regional policy. According to me it is dangerous because the regional policy is a planning policy, whereas the 2nd pillar policy is about accompanying small projects, individual or collective investment projects. It is not the same scale and pretending to merge both funds represents a risk that should not be taken*”. However, as specified by Alexandra Catalao: “*One has to be careful when bringing forward the idea of a unique fund as the solution to every problems! One must not fall in the idea that there is an urban policy and rural stakes*”.

Kristiina Tammets, President of ELARD, as European LEADER network, closed the debate highlighting that “*The attitude at European level and within the Commission has very much changed. They now talk about bottom-up approaches, locally based solutions, and they are already thinking about how to promote local communities participation in the framing of the future policies and in the development of our areas. We must reinforce the links between LAGs and the Commission, in order to expose what is really necessary for our areas*”.

Leader France's twentieth anniversary seminar

Strasbourg, 13th & 14th of September 2017

Review of the General Assembly 2017

If 2015 was a transition year, 2016 was a time of action in favour of rural communities. To defend LAGs and the implementation of LEADER, many lobbying actions and discussions were undertaken, including presenting LEADER France's official position to the Prime Minister, the President of the Association of the French Regions, etc. To meet LAGs staff expectations several actions directly targeted at LAGs were carried out, with the organisation of 2 one-day workshops and a seminar on cooperation in Dijon. The bilateral cooperation meetings launched in 2016 came true in 2017 with Poland and soon Germany, Spain, Hungary, etc.

LEADER France is the only network dedicated to LEADER, to which members sign up directly. The only aim of the association is to defend the interest of LEADER within metropolitan and overseas rural areas. The federation is a recognised partner among different bodies and is now able to relay the issues faced by LAGs along with their successes and other most innovative projects.

During the last 2 years the increasing number of memberships (almost 200 in 2017) and budget (€ 126 000) allowed for a better support through numerous events enabling to reinforce the networks of actors and the dissemination of good practices: binational cooperation meetings, regional representatives group and expert group, day workshops, etc.

Impelled by the new Council and always striving to strengthen the LEADER approach and its fundamentals, LEADER France as reinforced its role of spokesperson for the LAGs. In this respect and with the unanimous support of its members, LEADER France wants to further promote LEADER and spread the dynamic initiated by the federation in France and at European level by applying to ELARD presidency for 2018-2019. The central idea of this candidacy by LEADER France is to strengthen the network of European LAGs in order to put the fundamentals of LEADER-CLLD back at the centre of the debate (innovation, cooperation, networking, etc.) and to push for a necessary simplification.

