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Dear friends,

With the new elected presidency and the start of the new programming period, the start of this year has been a busy one.

Networking and policy-making being our priority now, we have started making our way into influencing the drafting of the future policies linked to rural development. Since January, we have taken an active role within the CAP network's Assembly and its LEADER subgroup, initiated discussions with MEPs and Commissioners to make our voices heard regarding the future of LEADER beyond 2027, as well as started drafting a contribution on added-value for the CAP Evaluation Helpdesk. We want to remain proactive in the beginning of this new programming period and make proposals in favour of a simplified and locally rooted rural development policy post-27. For this, we will engage LAGs within our members networks throughout the next two years.

I am happy to announce that within this, and in the spirit of continuously spread the LEADER approach, we have welcomed a new honorary member within ELARD yesterday: the Association of Rural Municipalities of Ukraine. Following our last General Assembly where members agreed to start cooperation with rural Ukraine, I went to Kiev and had the opportunity to meet with Ivan Slobodianyk, CEO of the association. They are familiar with the Leader approach and wish to implement it their process of pre-accession to the EU. Let's share our experience with them!

Don't hesitate to get in touch with us if you have comments or questions.

Kind regards,

Thibaut and the ELARD team

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## What we've been up to in the past three months

### Start of the new Presidency

Thibaut Guignard, President of LEADER France and Mayor of Ploeuc-L'Hermitage, started his mandate as President of ELARD. Click below to read more about his ambitions for the next two years.



[To Thibaut's interview](#)



### Joining the CAP network

ELARD was nominated as expert from the civil society in the General Assembly of the new CAP network, which was launched on 6 March. Many ELARD members were nominated to represent LAGs in their own countries. Hartmut Berndt, VP of ELARD, was nominated to represent LAGs within the Assembly's steering group.

ELARD was also nominated to participate in the Civil Dialogue Groups organised by the network on Environment and Climate Change, and the CAP Strategic Plans and Horizontal Matters.

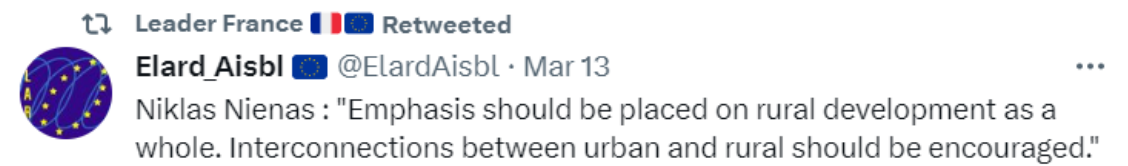
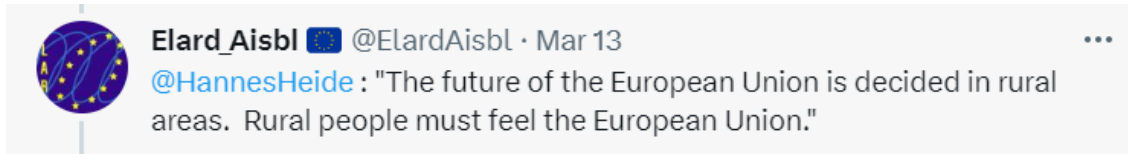
[More about the CAP network](#)

### Strasbourg General Assembly

Our members met for their 2023 General Assembly, in Strasbourg. Not only was it the opportunity to discuss activities for LAGs and members for the next two years, ELARD's ambitions and opinions, and approve our action plan and budget, but also to have a conversation with European MEPs from the REGI and AGRI Committees and various political parties on the future of LEADER in European Politics. Younous



conversation.



### More projects and more people

ELARD is busy with European-wide projects. Two new projects were granted since January: the Horizon project DIGIMEDFOR (Digital Mediterranean Forest), led by the University of Napoli, and the LIFE project "Fostering local engagement for Clean Energy Transition in Rural Areas through Energy Communities". The FLIARA project (Female-led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas) kickstarted in February.

Kadri Tillman (left) and Laura Incze (middle) have joined the ELARD team to manage respectively the [RUSTIK project \(Rural Sustainability Transitions through Integration of Knowledge for improved policy processes\)](#). and [FLIARA project](#). Marie Permingeat (right) joined from LEADER France to manage ELARD's day-to-day's activities and advocacy plans.



[More about our projects](#)

### Advocating for rural development

We advocate at national and european levels for better policies for rural development. Latest events where we were represented include the Civil

of the European Rural Parliament.



## We need your input on...

**Added-value** - We are currently putting together a contribution for the European Commission on LEADER's added value. The goal is to showcase how LEADER contributes to an area's development aside from its financial contributions. If your or your national/regional networks/LAGs have made any type of work/publication on added value in this past programming period, please share them with us. Language is not an issue, we can use originals. We are especially interested in 1) best practice case studies and 2) indicators to measure AV.

[Drop your resources here](#)

## Next events

**Rural Pact Conference - Uppsala (Sweden), 3-4 May** - Join and meet up with colleagues from different Member States, politicians, researchers, and representatives of the EU institutions, to hear

event starts with study visits to rural businesses in Uppsala county on May 3, and continues with an interactive conference on May 4. [Find the agenda here.](#)



[Register here](#)



**LEADER Inspired Network Community – LINC – Basilicata (Italy), 9 - 12 May** - LINC returns in the South of Italy this year to keep on combining exchange of experiences in communities in the EU and beyond. The event will promote the Area Leader Matera Orientale Metapontino and Basso Sinni territory, and participants will be able to find partners for cooperation projects, try sport activities, and regional cuisine. More about the event [here](#).

*Bookings are currently closed but more spaces might be released soon.*

### **SHERPA's final conference - Brussels, 1 - 2**

**June** - Since October 2019, SHERPA has worked on formulating recommendations for the future of rural areas and accompanied the development of the [EU Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas](#). This final will provide the opportunity to look back at the work done and identify, by using a co-creative participatory approach, the main SHERPA recommendations, as well as reflect on the methodology of using science-society-policy interfaces. Join to help propose adjustments to the EU Rural Action Plan and propose recommendations for the next EU policy cycle. [Agenda and registration here.](#)

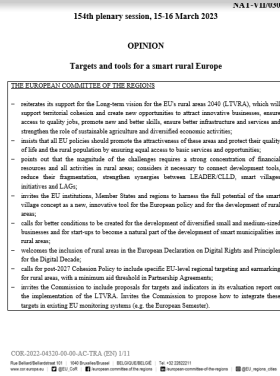


## **Food for thoughts and opinions**

**Tools and Targets for a smart rural Europe** - the opinion on the topic was adopted on 15 March. It stresses that successfully implementing the LTVRA will mean making better use of the smart village

development divide between rural and urban regions.

requires cooperation with other communities and the adoption of smart solutions in both the private and public sectors to improve the quality of life of people living in these regions. It adds that support for local production and consumption and cooperation among municipalities to solve issues of common interest and to create decision-making process based on open data and transparency are also key to bridging the



[Read the opinion here](#)

A new "Policy Insight" publication by the CAP network advocates the LEADER methodology, and highlights its contributions to agri-food cooperation, young people, entrepreneurship, the environment... A useful two-pager that needs sharing!

[Read it here!](#)

[Sign up to the CAP network LEADER newsletter](#)

## In our network



The Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has just approved 52 Local Action Groups for the 2023–2027 funding period, allocating 223 million euros (43 % FEADER, 37 % national funding, 20 % municipal funding). [Read more here.](#)



Swedish LAGs got together with support from Swedish NRN and designed and launched a webpage that gathers all Swedish LAGs. On the new website, visitors can learn more about LEADER/CLLD in Sweden and be inspired by projects. 39 out of 40 LAGs have sub-pages on this site. No more need for individual websites! [Visit the site here.](#)

The Spanish Rural Development network (REDR) held its General Assembly on 23 March. It was the opportunity to analyze the present and future of LEADER 2023-2027, talk about a recently approved Law on the Institutionalization of Public Policies and imagine a Spanish Rural Agenda.



LEADER France published a collection of best-practice LEADER projects from the 14-22 programming period. The compilation gathers more than 40 projects, divided into three thematic areas, and is meant to advocate LEADER's added value.. Most of these were also nominated or recieved awards for best LEADER projects since 2019. [Read it here.](#)



**European Leader Association  
for Rural Development**  
Brussels, [www.elard.eu](http://www.elard.eu)

**FRENCH  
PRESIDENCY**  
2023-2024



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