



Dear all,

We come to you with the first newsletter of 2024 ! Let me firstly wish you all a very Happy New Year.

Along 2023, we kept highlighting the importance of the LEADER program, and more broadly, the role of rural development in community policies.

The end of the year was marked by the organisation of the European LEADER Congress 2023 in December in Brussels, Belgium.

Both days were full and rich in the sharing of knowledge and experience of LEADER at European level. These two days were highlighted by its policy relevance and careful preparation.

The plenary session highlighted not only the issues at stake for each Member States but also the added value of LEADER and its influence on new rural development policies, particularly within the framework of the European Rural Pact.

The diversity of workshops on the second day highlighted the multitude of topics of high importance under ongoing discussions. The workshops allowed participants to express their point of views and to be heard, but also to meet and exchange with people. This experience gave new and motivating perspectives on rural development.

The LEADER program keeps showing great interest in innovative responses to needs in rural areas across the European Union. More than ever, LEADER and, more generally, local development led by local players appear to be one of the answers for a Europe closer to its citizens.

The 2023 LEADER European Congress was a great opportunity to recall the importance of the LEADER program for democracy in Europe and for all rural areas.

To reinforce the program's power, there is a need for simplification. It is also important to keep in mind that cooperation, which is at the heart of the program, is a vector for mutual enrichment and makes our projects grow.

I would like to thank you for your commitment and support in 2023. May 2024 bring new achievements.

Don't hesitate to follow us on [Facebook](#), [Linkedin](#), and [Twitter](#) to get more of our news live!

Kind regards,

Thibaut Guignard and the ELARD team

ELARD invited by the European Commission President von der Leyen

During her 2023 State of the Union Address, the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced the launch of a Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture in the European Union. Further details on the scope of the European Commission's Strategic Dialogue were set out in President von der Leyen's opening speech of the EU Agri-Food Days on 6 December.

This Dialogue will allow to listen to the concerns from across the agri-food chain, the environment and rural areas. By combining different perspectives from various actors, the Dialogue aims to bring about new solutions and to cultivate a common vision for the future of agriculture in Europe.

Represented by its President Mr. Thibaut Guignard, ELARD was one the 30 organisations which were invited to this meeting, on the 25th of January.

After having highlighted that without agriculture, there are no vibrant rural areas, and without vibrant rural areas, there will be no farmers anymore, Thibaut Guignard talked about the importance to have generational renewal, an european rural strategy, and a coherence between funding and strategy. This is what was asked by almost 700 rural stakeholders during the European LEADER Congress in last December in Brussels.

During his speech, the president of ELARD emphasized that rural areas should be taken into account as a whole in European policies, and not only agriculture. Indeed, new activities, services and culture should be developed in rural areas

to attract new and young farmers. He recalled that local development strategies implemented through LEADER are a key and, generally the only tool used in CAP strategic plans to address the multiple needs.

The importance to have an European rural strategy was also reminded, despite that fact that it has already been mentioned and asked by the European Institutions several times in meetings and resolutions.

Finally, he underlined the deep need to reinforce the financial support for rural areas to address all the challenges.

The next meeting of the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture will take place in March.



NAT opinion "Future of the Common Agricultural Policy"



The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) is currently drafting an own initiative opinion on "Future of the Common Agricultural Policy " in view of the launch of the structure dialogue on the future of agriculture.

The CoR own-initiative opinion is seeking to enable local and regional authorities to make a contribution to the design of the future legislative framework tailored to their needs and expectations.

The agreed timetable for the adoption of the opinion is as follows:

- Exchange of views at the NAT meeting on the 5th February 2024;
- First discussion and adoption of the draft opinion at the NAT meeting on the 22nd of March;
- Adoption at the plenary session of 19-20 June 2024.

In order to better understand the needs and expectations, the co-rapporteurs Isilda Maria Prazeres Gomes (PES/PT), Mayor of Portimão and Piotr Gałbecki (EPP/PL) and President of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Region asked the views of key stakeholders.

The working document highlights that additional efforts are needed, and shows the main challenges for local and regional authorities, which are :

- Strengthening the key role played by regional authorities in managing and implementing the CSPs;
- Maintaining agriculture and farmers in all territories to keep vibrant rural areas;
- Supporting the overall social and economic development of rural areas;
- Supporting the transition of the European food and agricultural system to achieve farm-to-fork goals.

ELARD contributed to the stakeholder consultation and sent its comments.

REBOUND: Fostering Resilience in Rural Communities

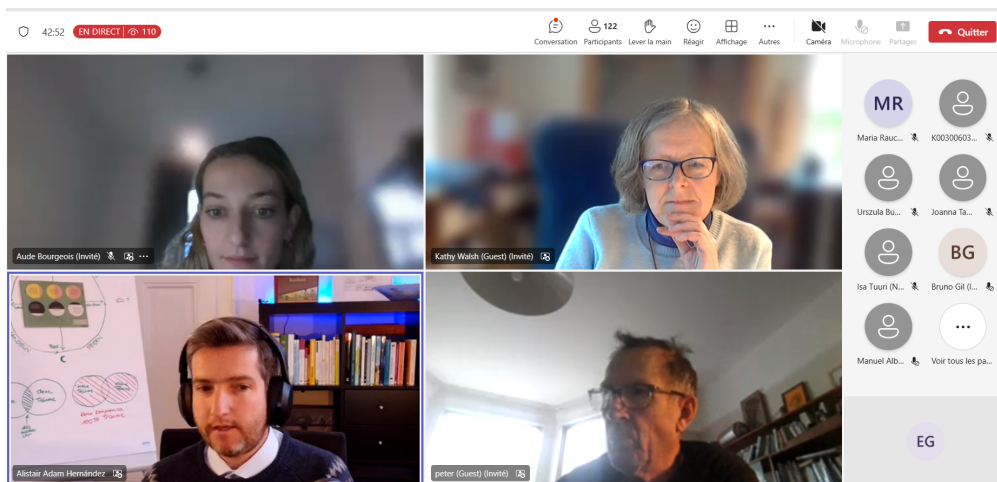
An EU-level webinar was organised by LDnet on behalf of AEIDL and the other REBOUND partners on the 23rd of January to talk about rural resilience, but also to present the REBOUND project (an ERASMUS + project).

This online event presented key concepts and models for rural resilience, on the ground practical experience based on case studies, as well as tools and practices to foster rural resilience.

Participants from the training courses, set-up by the REBOUND project, shared their experiences.

Panel discussions with several speakers were also organised. Speakers and panellists of the webinar included EP members, ELARD representatives, REBOUND researchers, project members, and local development experts.

ELARD stated how much the concept of rural resilience in local development is important. After explaining why LEADER is in itself a resilient program, ELARD mentioned the role played by LEADER in fostering the resilience of rural communities. The importance of LAGs was of course recalled.



European LEADER Awards 2023 : Winners announced in the Hemicycle of the European

Parliament

In November 2023, ELARD, and in collaboration with the national federations of LAGs, launched the European LEADER Awards.

The aim of this award ceremony is to reward the most impactful and innovative European projects of the 2014-2020 programme, and to highlight concrete achievements funded by the LEADER 2014-2020 programme. Indeed, ELARD wanted to give the opportunity to all European LAGs to publicise their achievements in terms of projects that were funded via the LEADER approach in 2014-2020.

Participants had until the 17th of November 2023 to submit their projects so that the Jury panel could judge and rate individually afterwards the projects on the following criteria : Innovation, Respect of the LEADER principles, and Local impact of the project.

At the same time was taking place in parallel the Public vote, on a dedicated digital platform.

The results and the winners were exclusively announced at the Awards Ceremony that took place during the 2023 European LEADER Congress in Brussels, Belgium, on the 18th December, within the Hemicycle of the European Parliament.

Four prizes were then awarded :

- **The People's Choice Award**, thanks to the online vote of the public ;
- **The 3 Jury's Choices Award.**

It is the project **Technology club Albrechtice nad Orlicí – Tékáčko**, from Czech Republic, who won the People's Choice Award.

The first prize for the Jury's Choices Award is the project **Villages of Portugal**, from Portugal. The second award goes to Spain with **The Green Experience** project, and the third award goes to France with **Accompagnement la mobilité en zone rurale** project.

For more information about the winning projects, LAGS and projects bearers, please click [here](#).

More than 115 projects have been submitted to the competition. All the projects can be found on this [dedicated page](#).

All the winning LAGs were present to receive their award on stage.



Launch of the Rural Toolkit : the first comprehensive online guide to EU funding and support opportunities for rural areas

Many EU funding and support initiatives have great potential to make rural areas more prosperous.

But how can potential beneficiaries identify the most appropriate schemes? Where can they find tips and guidance? The launch event of the Rural Toolkit has finally been announced.

On 6 February, 10.30 – 12.00 CET, there will be a presentation and live demo of the tool. This event is an opportunity to gain insight into how EU funding initiatives can foster development in rural territories, by supporting local authorities, institutions, NGOs, businesses and individuals. Best practices and inspiring stories will also be showcased.

As a reminder, the Rural toolkit is part of the [long-term vision for the EU's rural areas](#).

Agenda and practical details about the event will follow up soon.



Updates on ELARD Knowledge Hub



REFLECTS SUCCESSFULLY ON 2023

The year 2023 has been a pivotal period for ELARD Knowledge Hub, full of exciting initiatives and meaningful achievements. We want to take this opportunity to look back on some of the progress we've made during the year.

2023 Highlights



Dynamic Collaboration with RUSTIK: Building a Sustainable Future!

ELARD Knowledge Hub representatives, Marion Eckardt and Kadri Tillemann, have successfully concluded a dynamic 4-day consortium meeting with RUSTIK. The intensive sessions were marked by vibrant discussions, challenges, and a shared commitment to fostering sustainable transitions in rural areas.

RUSTIK



Empowering Futures: Athens Youth Employment

Transition Event!

In December, ELARD Knowledge Hub concluded the Cowork4youth project with a final event in Athens, marking its success.

The event, held at the project's inception site two years ago, focused on addressing challenges faced by young NEETs in tourism-dependent areas and transitioning regions. Over three days, academics, politicians, and social intervention practitioners discussed project outcomes and future paths. It was a momentous gathering, dedicated to finding solutions and shaping the future for these young individuals.



Upcoming events

- 6 February 2024 : Launch of the Rural toolkit (*online*)
- 15 - 16 February 2024: Joint Workshop on Sustainability (CDG Members) (*online & Brussels*)
- 12 March 2024: EU CAP network - Subgroup LEADER (*Brussels*)
- 9 - 10 May 2024: Slovenina Rural Parliament
- 24 - 26 May 2024: Swedish Rural Parliament



European Leader Association
for Rural Development
Brussels, www.elard.eu

FRENCH
PRESIDENCY
2023-2024



This email was sent to <<Email Address>>
[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)
ELARD Aisbl · Avenue Reine Astrid 59B/9 · Wemmel 1780 · Belgium