

## **ELARD delegation meeting with Mr. Mihail Dumitru, DG Agri Deputy Director General**

**29<sup>th</sup> of March 2017, Brussels**

Summary compiled by Kristiina Tammets

The main aim of the meeting was to exchange views between the European Commission and ELARD on the renewal of LEADER/CLLD for 2020+ programming period and explore additional cooperation possibilities in this process. Commission was represented by Mr. Mihail Dumitru, DG Agri Deputy Director General and Ms. Karolina Jasinska-Mühleck, DG Agri policy officer. ELARD was represented by its President Kristiina Tammets, Minha Terra's President Maria João Botelho from Portugal (Minha Terra holds ELARD vice-presidency) and Kirsten Birke Lund from Denmark, representing Danish LAGs at ELARD.

### **Main messages that have been said from ELARD and Commission side:**

1. ELARD President Kristiina Tammets brought forward the strength of LEADER/CLLD and capability of local action groups (LAG) in local and regional development. Bottom-up approach is close to people and therefore sustainable in long-term perspective. In order to assure bottom-up integrated rural development the role of LAGs and local stakeholders (communities, businesses, NGOs and municipalities) should increase in the future.

LAGs and local communities are ready to take more responsibility related to the CLLD multi-fund approach implementation. In order to do it we need simple, harmonized rules, better dialogue and good coordination at national level between different ministries and all other LEADER actors.

The role of LAGs as animators is very important as well as capacity building of all LEADER actors. There is a need to arise awareness of Paying Agencies about LEADER specialities and the value of animation activities and transnational co-operation. There has to be found common language between LEADER actors related to animation in order to use the real potential of LAGs in rural development.

2. Mihail Dumitru said that from the Commission side they were working towards better and simpler legal framework to implement EU policies, including CLLD multi-fund approach. They have started exploring with other Directorates General the scope for further harmonization regarding ESI Funds for the future programming period. Audit and control could also be part of the exercise.

DG AGRI has also launched a public consultation on Modernising and Simplifying the Common Agricultural Policy to collect ideas from the ground on the future policy. The Commissioner has said that he intends to take the Cork declaration into account in future policy development.

Mihail Dumitru said that he sees connections between Cork and Tartu declarations, and they should be looked at together in any further work in the field of LEADER/CLLD.

DG AGRI appreciates proposals from the grass roots to improve the implementation of LEADER/CLLD and looks forward to receiving further inputs from the stakeholders in this respect.



Finally M. Dumitru highlighted the need for better evaluation and monitoring mechanisms for the whole CAP, including LEADER/CLLD. He referred to a progressive change of mind set in the EU institutions with a shift of the focus from controls of eligibility towards ensuring results and assessing performance. We have made a first step in this direction already in the current period – we aim at assessing results achieved under Focus Areas and strategic priorities rather than looking at separate measures. It is important that the achievements of LAGs are fully demonstrated.

Last but not least Member States can do a lot at national level for simplification and better coordination between all actors implementing CLLD multi-funds. At the EU level the following main problems remain: financial management of small operations (they can be addressed by the use of simplified cost options, umbrella projects) and control rules (they are being looked at in the proposed modification of the control regulation).

3. ELARD and Commission both expressed their wish and willingness for closer dialogue and cooperation in the process of renewing LEADER/CLLD for 2020+ and already mapped some further possibilities (meetings, conferences) to bring forward proposals from local level.