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# Flash News

## Leader+ Observatory

### focus



#### Slovakia

The Slovak Republic did not implement the Leader approach in its sectorial operational programme on agriculture and rural development during 2004-2006. However, within the technical assistance measure of the pre-accession programme SAPARD, Leader-type activities were implemented. The global aim of this support was capacity building in rural micro-regions and technical support for sustainable development of rural areas. The activities were focused on following tasks: to teach local action teams to create sustainable integrated development strategies; to develop the capacities of local stakeholders; and to provide technical assistance for Leader. This led to the design and management of 11 Leader-type strategies for socio-economic development.

With 2 753 villages, Slovakia has a relatively high number of rural settlements. Although the Leader+ programme was not implemented, a number of partnerships, called micro-regions, were created in rural areas. Operating as village or civic associations, they are based on common geographic, historic, cultural, or economic characteristics. The first ones were established in the mid 1990s and many achieved a wide range of successful activities and projects. With the implementation of the Leader type measure (Axis 4) in mind, micro-regions are currently preparing their strategies in time for the start of the new programme.

The Leader axis in the new programming period is designed to improve administration, management and mobilisation in rural areas. The aim is to help local economies diversify into non-agricultural activities.

The Ministry of Agriculture (the Managing Authority for the EAFRD) is currently developing a strategy for LAG selection, creation and implementation. The contact already established with existing Leader+ LAGs in other EU countries has provided Slovakia with best practice on LAG management, project implementation, and networking. For more information, please contact [Malvina Gondova](#), Agency for Rural Development.



#### Cooperation projects with Romania

Even if Romania only joined the European Union on the 1 January 2007, there are already several ongoing cooperation projects with partners from the old member states. One example is a project between a LAG in France and two partners in Romania to develop hiking trails and tourism to increase the awareness of sustainable development. Another project involves an Italian LAG and Romanian partners offering communication services to local SMEs, and encourage their use in developing the surrounding areas. To find out more about these and other cooperation projects, please visit the [Leader+ cooperation database](#).



#### German NNU workshop on the start-up of the Leader method in the framework of the EAFRD

28 February – 1 March, 2007

Fulda, Germany

The German NNU, recently appointed as National Rural Network Unit for 2007-2013 is already organising a series of workshops for LAGs and potential LAGs which are preparing for the new funding period. This first workshop looks at: how to develop a local strategy, taking into account the different possible approaches in the given situation of the territory; and to what extent the strategy has to be designed by the future LAG itself. Here the new LAGs will benefit from the experience of the "old" Leader+ LAGs. The following workshop to be held in Gotha will focus more in detail on the design of the strategy regarding fields of action, governance potential, and priority projects. For more information please contact [the German NNU](#).

For more information please click on the headlines

FLASH NEWS

## links

[Leader+ website](#)

[Leader+ Magazine](#)

[New Rural Development Regulation 2007-2013](#)



For more information please click on the headlines



### European Leader+ Observatory seminar "The Legacy of Leader+: Building the future for rural development"

24 – 26 April, 2007

Cap Corse, Corsica, France

This seminar is addressed mainly to Local Action Groups. It will provide an understanding of the Leader legacy through a historical perspective of the initiative, and in particular address the Leader+ characteristics and their relevance for future rural development policy. Due to the limited number of places available, the number of attendees is restricted by a quota for each Member State. The official invitation for this seminar organised by the European Leader+ Observatory will be sent out by e-mail soon. If you have any questions, please contact [Michaela Galvankova](mailto:Michaela.Galvankova@ec.europa.eu) either by e-mail or phone: +32 2 235 2026.

### Enhancing the capacity of partnerships to influence policy

18 – 20 April, 2007

Dublin, Ireland

The seminar organised by the OECD will focus on skills development, and in particular those of local partnerships in designing and delivering skills development strategies. The seminar will allow an in-depth discussion on the value of partnerships to influence policy makers at local, national and international levels. The target groups are partnership managers, practitioners and co-ordinators looking to expand their involvement and their counterparts in the public sector. Participants will be chosen on the basis of CVs and partnership questionnaires. For more information, please contact [Elisa Campestrin](mailto:Elisa.Campestrin@ec.europa.eu).

### Bridging the broadband gap

14 – 15 May, 2007

Brussels, Belgium

Access to broadband internet connection is very important for rural areas in Europe. However concerns about costs and expected low financial returns, means that commercial operators are reluctant to extend the network to thinly populated areas. Yet the remoteness of these regions is the main reason why a fast and stable internet connection is necessary. The aim of this conference is to focus on the need to include rural areas in the broadband network both on a political and practical level. The conference will include an exhibition to emphasise the importance of information and communication technologies in rural development. The European Commission is inviting applications from public authorities that undertook projects to support rural and regional development through the opportunities provided by the use of broadband. Up to 40 projects will be selected from the applications as good practice, and will be invited to exhibit at the event and share their experiences with the conference participants. Three of the projects will be selected as the best European Broadband Project Award for 2007. The Call for Exhibits is now open until midnight, 2 March 2007. As many Leader + local action groups have financed projects on the theme use of know-how and new information technologies, LAGs are invited to present applications to [this call for projects](#). For more information, please contact [the organisers](#).

### Workshop:

#### Which European rural development network for 2007-2013?

27 February, 2007

Brussels, Belgium

The objective of this workshop organised by M.E.R. (Mouvement Européen de la Ruralité) and R.E.D. (Ruralité Environment Development) is to open a forum for discussion between European Institutions and rural networks to create a rural development network that can meet the wishes and needs of all stakeholders in rural Europe. This discussion will include representatives from the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions as well as members of civil society. For more information, please contact [Patrice Collignon](mailto:Patrice.Collignon@ec.europa.eu) of the European rural network.

### COOPERATION CORNER

#### Partner search tool

Finding partners for cooperation on Leader+ projects concerns many LAGs. If you have specific information about a cooperation event or project, you can send us details. Remember also to use the partner search tool, which you can find on both European and national Leader+ sites.

A LAG in France is looking for partners for a project organising the exhibition of a post card collection from rural municipalities in Europe on the internet. A LAG in Italy is looking for partners for a project to develop tourist itineraries in rural areas and to provide guest rooms in restored farm houses.

These projects are looking for partners. You could be one of them! Learn more about these proposals by consulting the partner search tool via the above-mentioned link.



### "Flash News" contributions

Don't forget "Flash News" is your news too! Help us to keep you informed by telling us about what you are doing in rural development in your area. Please send to [flashnews@leaderplus.org](mailto:flashnews@leaderplus.org).

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