



Plœuc-L'Hermitage, le 18<sup>th</sup> of January 2023

Dear Member of Parliament,

As you may know, the 2023-2027 programming period of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) has started on 1st January 2023 in all Member States.

This is why I take the liberty today to contact you, on behalf of the European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD) - the European federation of rural territories involved in the LEADER rural development approach - to put forward two major problematics for rural territories: the implementation of the LEADER programme in the 2023-2027 programming period and the place of rural development within European policies.

ELARD is a European association which gathers and represents nearly 2,800 Local Action Groups from 29 countries, including neighbouring countries of the European Union that have adopted and are implementing the LEADER methodology of local development by local actors.

The organisation is actively working to make the LEADER approach better known among European decision-makers in order to guarantee its existence and funding in the European rural development policy. The association supports local development led by local actors (through the networking of private and public actors, the dissemination of good practices, support for innovative actions, European cooperation, etc.) and defends the interests of Local Action Groups among national governments and European institutions.

Since January 1st, our network, Leader France, has been chairing ELARD. Leader France has worked actively to promote the place of rural areas in European policies at the occasion of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2022. The opportunity to chair the European network is a significant one for France - which was at the initiative of the approach in the 1990s - to promote LEADER and more broadly, local development by local actors.

Today, the place of rural development in European policies is embodied by the LEADER measure. A truly useful approach for organised and active rural areas that want to bring about development. For territories, the importance of this programme goes well beyond its direct financial impact.



Its specific method has enabled the emergence of innovative projects in territories that were then used as models for all European territories. More than a funding tool, LEADER is a rural development approach with its own fundamentals: building networks of local actors, using a bottom-up approach, building on good practices and disseminating them, cooperating... It is one of the rare approaches that democratically structures the European project and ensures, since 1993, the presence and visibility of the European Union itself in each town, and each village of the European Union.


ELARD's General Assembly will take place on 13 and 14 March 2023 in Strasbourg, using the Parliamentary week as an opportunity to gather stakeholders. We would like to organise a time for discussion between the representatives of the LEADER networks from all Member States and the Members of the European Parliament on 13 March (Monday) from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the European Parliament.

This meeting will allow for a conversation on the implementation of the LEADER approach in the 2023-2027 programming period and more generally on the place of rural development within European policies.

This is why, knowing your European commitment towards territories in your mandate as Member of the European Parliament, we would be most honoured if you were to accept to take part in this event and discuss the topic with us.

Marie PERMINGEAT, project manager for Leader France (leader.mariepermingeat@gmail.com) is available for your teams to discuss the programme in more detail.

Please accept, dear Member of Parliament, the expression of my highest consideration.



Thibaut GUIGNARD  
President of Leader France  
President of ELARD

