



## CLLD country profile: **Austria**

### 1. Key messages about local development and CLLD in this country

In Austria, LEADER builds on a strong tradition, ever expanding since Austria started with LEADER II with its EU accession in 1995. It covers 90% of all rural areas, which means 4.6 million people (79% of people living in rural areas).

The managing authority is the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism (BMLRT), more precisely the Rural Development Department. Only since 2018 the ERDF coordination has been integrated into the same Ministry, the implementation is however decentralised at the level of the nine Länder (States).

Also, several parts of the implementation of the EAFRD are delegated to the Länder, which means that the main interlocutors for LAGs are the “measure-responsible offices” in the relevant State Governments (Landesregierung). In the 2014-20 period, whether to make use of a multi-Fund approach could be decided at State level. Only the State of Tyrol decided to integrate EAFRD and ERDF plus some State-based schemes into one package; in addition, the State of Carinthia decided to fund one cross-border LAG with the EAFRD as the lead Fund under CLLD (ETC/ERDF).

One national network unit, embedded in the Austrian contact point for the “Network Rural Future Space” (Netzwerk Zukunftsraum Land), organises seminars and working groups for cross-cutting schemes, encouraging cross-fertilisation and innovative approaches to emerge and spread among the 77 LAGs.

There is also a bottom-up association of LAGs, the so-called Austrian LEADER Forum, whose representatives take part in policy discussions and which contributes to improvements to implementation of the measure.

### 2. CLLD used in the following Funds:

Fund		CLLD budget from the Fund
EAFRD	✓	€247.2 million
EMFF	□	
ESF	□	
ERDF	✓	€18.3 million composed of: €12.9 million (ETC) €5.54 million (mainstream Austrian ERDF OP)

### 3. Possibility of multi-funding (linking several Funds in one strategy):

The possibility always existed, although not encouraged by the Federal coordination level. However the State of Tyrol opted for a comprehensive integration of EAFRD and ERDF, whereas Carinthia took up the opportunity to fund the cross-border LAG (LAG Hermagor plus the Italian LAGs Open Leader and Euroleader (Region Friuli-Venezia-Giulia). The visible success of the Tyrolian example has sparked a new discussion to opt for multi-funding at a broader scale for the period 2021-27.

#### 4. Number of LAGs

Fund	Number of LAGs using this Fund	
	Multi-funded	Mono-funded
EAFRD	9	68
EMFF		
ESF		
ERDF	9	
<b>Total number of LAGs</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>68</b>

#### 5. Purposes, objectives for which CLLD is used

The framework for LDS set out for the LAGs imposed no limits on the content or strategic orientation of the LAGs. According to the results-based monitoring system set up for the whole country, the LDS was structured into investments into:

- Economic added value
- Natural and cultural heritage
- Common wellbeing

#### 6. State of play

Although the CLLD/LEADER measure had an early start, the disbursement rate of the EAFRD LEADER measure was at 37.9% at the end of 2019. With 74.3% of the funds already committed (Annual Implementation Report 2019), there is no doubt that the budget will be utilised by the end of the period.

#### 7. Key achievements so far

The Enhanced Implementation Report from 2019 says that, by the end of 2018, 500 jobs have been maintained while 263 new jobs have been created, with more than 50% for women. This means that the target result of 490 new jobs will be probably reached. 90% of LAGs stated that cooperation has been an important element in implementation, 73% state the same for networking. However only 37% stated that the projects actually managed to create new links between different economic sectors. The influence on equal opportunities in respect to gender is said to be tangible. This is supposed to be owed to the 33.3% share of women in project selection committees. An increase of the minimum threshold to 40% is under discussion.

Self-evaluation has become common practice and yields satisfactory results.

#### 8. Key barriers encountered

The centrally designed and imposed results-based monitoring system has been criticised as too complicated and somewhat missing the point of the LEADER added value. Heavy bureaucracy in the delivery process has also been a recurring point of criticism, specifically the accounting rules. So-called “small projects” (up to €5,700) and “umbrella projects” for which simplified rules apply, have been cited as positive elements.

#### 9. Some national specificities

The Tyrolian example of multi-Fund integration has become a good practice-anchor point in the discussions about the next programming period. Important topics will be

- The intensification of territorial governance (sharing responsibility between federal and State/regional levels)
- Better coordination between support schemes (with the LAG as the “regional one-stop-shop”)
- Climate change, digitalisation and rural-urban cooperation as priority themes (at least before the Covid-19 crisis struck)
- Intertwining between smart specialisation (ERDF), smart villages and CLLD/LEADER

- Enhanced simplified cost options and other relief measures to reduce the bureaucratic burden

*September 2020*

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