



## CLLD country profile: Poland

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

CLLD is implemented throughout the country under EAFRD and EMFF, and in two regions also under ERDF and ESF, with multi-funded strategies combining several EU Funds. Good experience of rural and fisheries CLLD from the previous funding period was used to develop innovative delivery features such as Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) for LAG running costs and for projects, umbrella projects, widely accessible advance payments etc. The overall experience of CLLD implementation in Poland is positively assessed by stakeholders at all levels, but there are significant differences between Funds and regions. Delays due to administrative complexities are occasionally observed, as well as diverging interpretations by responsible authorities.

### 2. CLLD used in the following Funds

Fund		CLLD budget from the Fund (€)
EAFRD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	500,755,600
EMFF	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	79,699,995
ESF	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	65,719,976
ERDF	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	58,962,782

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

It is possible to link several Funds in one strategy, with the Lead Fund of multi-funded LAGs (the Fund which covers LAG running and animation costs for the whole strategy) most frequently being EAFRD, but in some cases EMFF and, for urban LAGs, also ESF.

Multi-funded LAGs combining EAFRD and EMFF are found in seven Polish regions (out of 16 regions in total), and in two regions (Kujawsko-Pomorskie and Podlaskie) LAGs can also use ERDF and ESF in their strategies, although in practice there is only one LAG using all four Funds (Brodnicza Lake District). In several other regions, LAGs and FLAGs can also access ERDF and ESF funding by submitting applications to specific calls for projects, but such projects are not part of an integrated strategy.

### 4. Number of LAGs

Fund	Number of LAGs using this Fund	
	Multi-funded	Mono-funded
EAFRD	41	251
EMFF	12	24
ESF	31	7
ERDF	31	-
<b>Total number of LAGs</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>282</b>

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

The vast majority of LAGs is located in rural areas, and they work mainly on improving the quality of rural life (with many projects focusing on public investments in infrastructure), and on business development and diversification of local economies (with a strong focus on local products, from both agriculture and fisheries, and on tourism). The LAGs using ESF and ERDF, both rural and urban, are very active in the field of social inclusion,

targeting e.g. long-term unemployed persons, people with disabilities, children and young people from deprived families etc. The inland LAGs using EMFF (both mono- and multi-funded) are working closely with aquaculture producers, especially fish farms with extensive production (e.g. carp).

## 6. State of play

At the start of the funding period many delays were caused by the lack of experience and insufficient coordination between national and regional authorities responsible for the different Funds. Later on, these difficulties seem to have been overcome and by 2020 the implementation of CLLD in the 2014-2020 period is well advanced. Some of the preliminary results of implementation are exceeding expectations: for example, from the start of the funding period to mid-2019, LEADER LAGs already created an estimated 10,000 rural jobs. In September 2020, the Polish EMFF LAGs accounted for more than 25% of all projects funded under fisheries CLLD across the EU.

Since 2019, a debate about the future of CLLD in Poland is going on with the involvement of national, regional and local stakeholders, as well as with the relevant services of the European Commission. Several Polish regions are investigating the possibility of using CLLD under ERDF and/or ESF and studying the experience of Kujawsko-Pomorskie and Podlaskie regions, which is generally judged to be positive.

In 2019 two major evaluation exercises were carried out of the implementation of CLLD in Poland, one at the national level (commissioned by the Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development), the other at the regional level (commissioned by the Podlaskie regional authority), both indicating good progress and recommending some changes that would further simplify CLLD delivery.

## 7. Key achievements so far

At the local level, LAGs and FLAGs are quite successful in supporting projects and reaching targets envisaged in their strategies. They are particularly good at involving the local community in strategy development and providing capacity building and advice to applicants. Many – but not all – have become genuine local development agencies able to integrate different sources of funding and drive forward change.

At the national level, a number of practical innovations have been introduced to facilitate CLLD delivery, such as umbrella projects, SCOs for running costs and for projects, or availability of advance payments for all types of beneficiaries – although there are some differences in the application of these mechanisms between Funds. The special legal form established to facilitate the creation of LAGs as public-private partnerships is generally assessed as a success and is studied with interest by other countries, both within and outside the EU. There is also strong political commitment to CLLD, especially in the EAFRD managing authority and some regional authorities.

## 8. Key barriers encountered

In spite of many innovative mechanisms, there are still many barriers and administrative complexities in the Polish delivery system of CLLD. The process of verification and approval of projects and requests for payments can take many months and sometimes goes beyond the eligibility check, thus duplicating the selection at LAG level. Lack of understanding of the CLLD approach by some staff at national and regional level, insufficient harmonisation of rules across the Funds, lack of trust between different delivery actors and excessive fear of audits and controls are preventing CLLD from achieving its full potential.

At the local level, many LAGs and FLAGs are excessively dominated by the public sector (municipalities), and some of them focus more on “ticking the boxes” of all administrative

requirements than on achieving real change on the ground. An additional constraint is the low level of education and skills of some of the local beneficiaries.

### **9. Some national specificities**

Polish stakeholders started to prepare for the LEADER/CLLD approach even before Poland's accession to the EU. In addition, many of the key decision-makers, especially in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, have expert-level knowledge of both theory and practice of LEADER and CLLD. These factors could explain some of the successes and innovative features of CLLD implementation.

On the other hand, the Polish institutional and legal system is extremely detailed and rigorous, which translates into excessively long and detailed application forms and procedures, and contributes to the delays in decision-making processes and administrative burden on local actors.

*November 2020*

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