



CLLD country profile: Estonia

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

The LEADER programme in Estonia started in 2006, and has since been an important tool for rural development. As much as 10% of the RDP budget is allocated to the LEADER measure.

Local action groups cover 100% of the rural territory. However, rural development and fisheries groups are separated, and multifunding options are not used during the period of 2014-20. There is also a bottom-up association of LAGs, the Estonian Leader Union with 20 member LAGs.

2. CLLD used in the following Funds

Fund		CLLD budget from the Fund (€)
EAFRD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	72,000,000
EMFF	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26,282,074
ESF	<input type="checkbox"/>	-
ERDF	<input type="checkbox"/>	-

Planned allocation at programme start

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

No multifund options offered in Estonia in the 2014-2020 period

4. Number of LAGs

Fund	Number of LAGs using this Fund	
	Multi-funded	Mono-funded
EAFRD	-	26
EMFF	-	8
ESF	-	-
ERDF	-	-
Total number of LAGs	-	34

All LAGs are mono-funded. The total number of members of Estonian LAGs exceeds 1,500 (public sector 13%, entrepreneurs 37% and NGOs 37%). Each LAG has some 60 members on average.

5. Purposes, objectives for which CLLD is used

The Estonian Rural Development Plan for 2014-2020 has six main priorities, with LEADER under priority 6: promotion of social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.

The LEADER Local Development Strategy is a plan for an active community, bringing together actors from public and private sectors to develop and implement the strategies in a bottom-up way. The LEADER projects are mostly focused on developing regionally important activities and solving deficits, as well as stimulating civic participation. Business development is strongly prioritised, with microbusinesses receiving over 90% of the total

support. In the EMFF CLLD for 2007-2013 a large proportion of the budget was used for improvements in small fishing ports.

6. State of play

Implementation of CLLD under both EAFRD and EMFF is well advanced and LAGs and FLAGs are supporting a lot of fairly small-scale projects. Currently the Estonian Leader Union is negotiating the possibility of implementing CLLD in ESF and ERDF in the next programming period – expecting a decision by the end of 2020.

7. Key achievements so far

By 30 Sept 2020, 95% of the LEADER funds had been allocated to projects, and 73% had been paid (to 3,625 projects). The number of new jobs created has already reached more than 200% of the target value. In EMFF, FLAGs have supported over 900 projects.

8. Key barriers encountered

All local strategies are still mono-funded, although the range of project goals is wider, including mainly social and environmental issues.

A recent study showed that while EU support has made unprecedented external funds available for policy measures in Estonia, their use has not led to a reduction in regional inequalities within the country. This was even more so because the cohesion aims were rather implemented centrally and in a spatially blind way after Estonia's accession to the EU in 2004 (Estonian Human Development Report 2019/2020 - <https://inimareng.ee/en/estonian-human-development-report-20192020.html>).

9. Some national specificities

Estonia is characterised by a low population density and growing urbanisation. Rural settlements (small towns, villages) are home to 32% of the population and one-third of Estonian enterprises. Nearly 23% of agricultural land in 2019 was organic farmland, which places Estonia second in the EU after Austria. Nearly half of all cattle and sheep are farmed organically.

The Estonian government gives high priority to CLLD and the proportion of both EAFRD and EMFF budgets allocated to this approach is one of the highest in the EU (10% in the case of EAFRD, nearly 30% in the case of EMFF).

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