



The ESF and community-led local development: Lessons for the future

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Why CLLD?



To build
community capacity



Foster
innovation



Provide for
structural changes



Local Action Group
– **hub and facilitator**
of social innovation

Recital 31, 2014-2020 Common provisions Regulation
Recital 32, 2021-2027 Common provisions Regulation

Why CLLD in ESF?

● European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development **(EAFRD)**

● European Maritime and Fisheries Fund **(EMFF)**

● European Regional Development Fund **(ERDF)**

● European Social Fund **(ESF)**



The benefits for local communities:

- Expanded scope of local partnerships involved in the design and implementation of CLLD strategies
- Broader number of thematic objectives and interventions that can be pursued
- Enhanced ability to develop locally co-ordinated and integrated actions across a more diverse local environment (rural, coastal and urban)

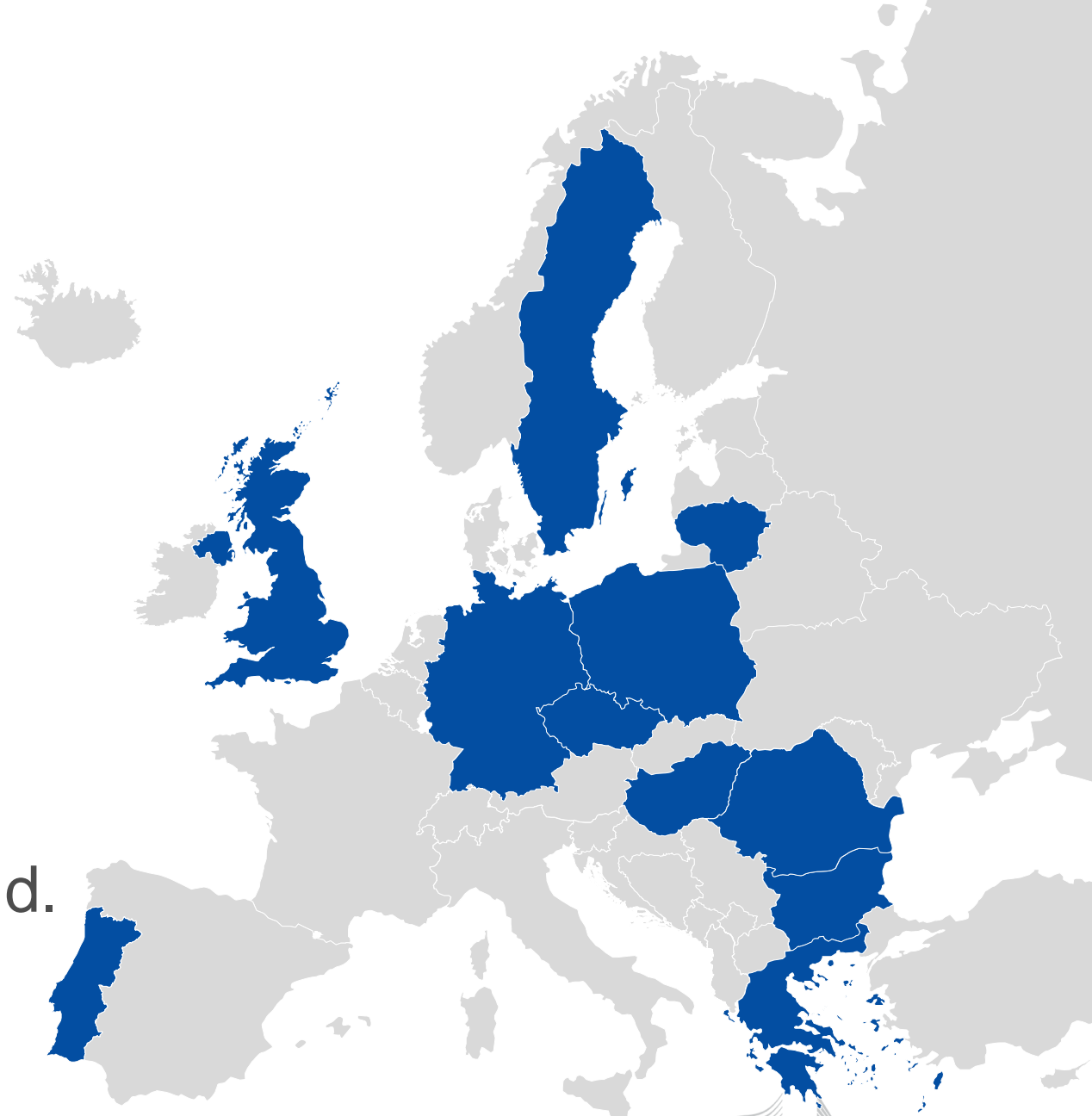
CLLD as a new approach in the ESF

- In Thematic Objective 9 – promoting **social inclusion**, combating poverty and any discrimination
- **Mainstreamed** under the selected IPs, or programmed under the **CLLD Investment Priority 9vi**
- Extended to **urban areas**
- Use of CLLD was at Member States' **discretion**

Different ways of programming CLLD in ESF Operational Programmes

	BG	CZ	DE	EL	HU	IT	LT	PL	RO	SE	UK
Dedicated CLLD OP (national)										•	
OP (national) with dedicated Priority Axis	•	•			•		•		•		
OP (national) with as one type of project within a Priority Axis	•*										
Regional OP with dedicated Priority Axis								•			•
Regional OP with CLLD as one type of project within a Priority Axis			•	•							

- **11 countries** used CLLD allocating to it EUR 707 million
- **578 LAGs** used ESF funding (17% of all LAGs using ESI Funds)
- **78% of LAGs** were multi-funded, where the ESF was not the lead fund.



Factors affecting the use of ESF funding for CLLD

...ENCOURAGING...

- Broader range of eligible themes
- Broader range of target groups and more projects
- Space for innovative experimentation
- Facilitation of integrated approaches to local development
- Promotion of community trust
- Programming support
- Previous CLLD experience

X

...DISCOURAGING...

- Administrative complexity and silo mindsets
- Time and capacity-building
- Connecting local needs to predefined Thematic Objectives
- Existence of other place-based interventions

Types of ESF-funded CLLD support

	BG	CZ	DE	EL	HU	LT	PL	RO	UK
Employment	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●
Inclusion	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●
Education	●	●	●				●	●	●

Access to employment:
A goodie shop (Czechia)



Promoting social inclusion:
Cat Zero (UK)



Promoting education:
Vocational training for
sound engineers in Šilutė (Lithuania)



C**CONSIDER TIME**

The time it takes for the beneficiary to get a decision on a project, or to receive funding, is an essential factor for small-scale projects typical of CLLD. It is also important to ensure adequate preparation time for developing the project with partners. It is a good indicator of the complexity of your delivery system. Compare the time such decisions take in your country/region with other countries or regions. Do you know how many beneficiaries have abandoned their projects because the administrative processes take too long?

CONSIDER SIZE

CLLD grants are typically small and their beneficiaries (SMEs, local NGOs) should not be obliged to follow the same rules as larger projects concerning application for support, public procurement, reporting etc. If most CLLD funding in your country/region goes to large-scale beneficiaries or projects, this is a sign that the delivery rules may need to be adapted.

COORDINATE ACROSS FUNDS

Reconciling diverse delivery rules, reporting obligations and institutional practices of each EU Fund is not easy, but is certainly easier at national or regional level than at LAG or beneficiary level. Think of the effort and cost it involves if all your LAGs have to comply with a different set of rules and procedures for each Fund. Make sure they are as harmonised as possible before LAGs start implementing their strategies.

Managing authorities at national/regional level

L**LIMIT ADDITIONAL RULES**

Do not create additional rules beyond the EU legislation. This may not only discourage many potentially valuable projects, but also will increase error rates and audit risks (there will be more things for auditors to check). If you want the funding to focus on a specific type of project or beneficiary, perhaps it is enough to provide training or guidance to the LAGs instead of creating extra rules.

LEAVE SCOPE FOR LOCAL ACTORS

Do not try to define everything up-front. For example, trying to define innovation at national or regional level can reduce innovation potential at local level. Local actors will always come up with ideas (or expenses) which you have not foreseen. In particular, do not create detailed lists of what is eligible – it is enough to define what is ineligible, everything else is allowed.

LAGs

L**LOOK BROAD**

Make sure a broad selection of stakeholders is involved in all stages, from strategy development to decision-making and project implementation. Do not rely only on those that are already active – take time to reach out and motivate others, even those who initially seem less relevant or unable to contribute. They may come up with unexpected new ideas that will help to move your strategy forward.

LINK UP!

Create linkages where possible: between public and private actors, between different sectors of the local economy, between existing and new projects. Encourage projects implemented by several partners. Think about how to link experienced and new beneficiaries to facilitate learning. Invest in projects that can act as network hubs, around which other initiatives can be developed.

LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE

Draw lessons from past experience at all levels: as managing authorities, analyse the effectiveness of your delivery system and change the rules if needed (it is generally easier to change rules than to change people's behaviours). At LAG level, assess what has worked/not worked and make sure your next strategy takes this into account. When facing a problem, look outside your area or country: there are certainly other managing authorities or LAGs who have already faced a similar problem, why not learn from them?

Managing authorities & LAGs

D**DIFFERENTIATE**

CLLD is, and should be, different from mainstream approaches. Managing authorities and LAGs should constantly ask themselves: how are we different from the mainstream programmes? In what way do the delivery rules take into account the bottom-up nature of CLLD? In what way are the supported projects different from mainstream projects? How is our LAG different from a typical local development agency? Only then can CLLD bring added value.

DEVELOP UNDERSTANDING

It is important that all the actors along the chain have a common understanding of CLLD: its objectives, its potential, its specificity. Foster such understanding by facilitating dialogue and exchanges between managing authorities, LAGs and beneficiaries – why not develop joint study visits or exchange of trainees? Do not forget to build this understanding among bodies responsible for payments, other government agencies, people in charge of audits and controls, etc.

The added value of CLLD for ESF-funding

Role effects

To what extent has the CLLD approach contributed to structural changes in terms of promoting social inclusion and labour market participation?

- On paper, CLLD and mainstream ESF projects might look the same but the work behind them is very different, particularly with regard to how projects are prepared and integrated within the local development strategy.
- CLLD supports networking and cooperation within municipalities to address social problems in an integrated way. It gives local stakeholders (LAGs) a voice in designing and planning interventions for their local communities. In some cases the LAGs act as the managing authority at local level.
- CLLD facilitates access to EU funds for beneficiaries/project providers that do not have the capacity to apply for mainstream ESF funding (e.g. village schools, small NGOs, sports clubs).

Process effects

Have Member State administrations and participating organisations derived benefits from using the CLLD approach?

- CLLD enables closer cooperation between ESI Funds (ESF-ERDF-EMFF-EAFRD).
- CLLD builds relationships with new ESF stakeholders – LAGs.

Scope effects

Has the CLLD approach broadened existing actions for groups or policy areas that would otherwise not have been addressed?

- CLLD allows support to reach small communities, distanced from larger cities where mainstream ESF support may be concentrated.
- CLLD brings EU funds closer to local communities (real people) and their needs.
- CLLD improves the reach to vulnerable groups and empowers them to have a voice in the community.

Volume effects

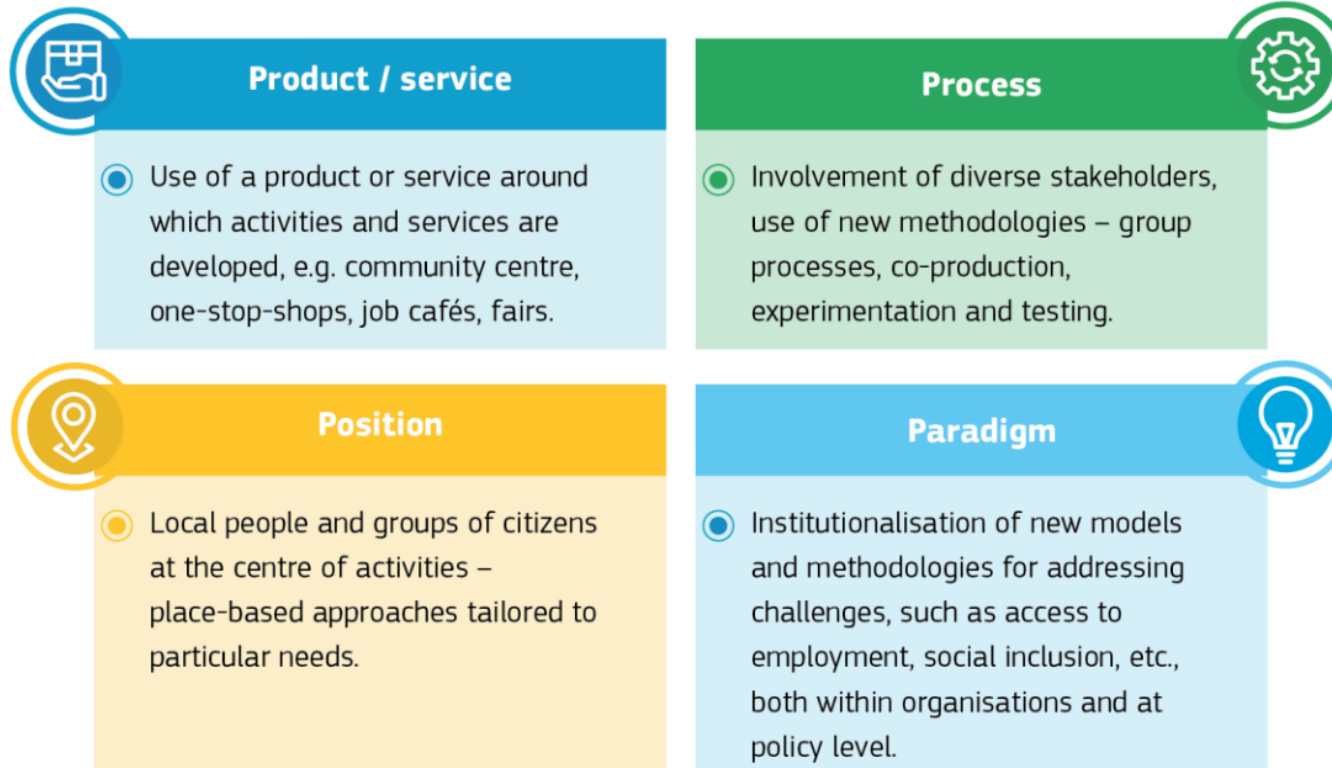
Has the CLLD approach added to existing actions or directly produced beneficial effects that can be measured in terms of volume?

- CLLD encourages shared, integrated administrative services, such as communications and marketing for LAGs, and allows human and financial resources to be directed to more projects.

Social innovation in CLLD projects

'Social innovation' means an activity, that is social both as to its ends and its means and in particular an activity which relates to the development and implementation of **new ideas concerning products, services, practices and models**, that simultaneously **meets social needs** and creates **new social relationships or collaborations** between public, civil society or private organisations, thereby **benefiting society and boosting its capacity to act**.

Source: Article 2(8), 2021/1057 (ESF+ Regulation).



Volunteer-run hygiene hub (Lithuania)



Aim: promote volunteering at local level.

Target group: elderly unable to take care of their personal hygiene independently.

Support: volunteers provide essential hygiene and laundry service in hygiene hub

Results:

- 8 pensioners became long-term volunteers
- Practice was replicated in the cities of Biržai and Rokiškis where 70 people are currently receiving similar services.



Recommendations

- More communication and sharing of learning
- More administrative flexibility
- More autonomy for LAGs
- More diverse target groups
- More diverse indicators to measure progress