



## LDnet: Annual Report to General Assembly

Brussels, 9th October 2017

1. **General.** The activities of LDnet have continued. Priority has been accorded to developing cooperation with other networks and especially, with the research world, with a view to influencing policy and practice and promoting local development. As part of the former, we have co-organised with ELARD a workshop as part of EWRC 2017. As part of the latter we have cooperated with the Regional Studies Association and have also organised an internship with a German university (HAWK Göttingen) under Erasmus+. More information is provided below.
2. **LDnet website.** The improvements to the LDnet website continued during the year. Export of material from the old site was completed and this can be accessed from the new LDnet website. It is also possible for members to contribute information and upload material. The website includes information on other networks in which LDnet members are engaged - e.g., FARNET, LEADER, URBACT, as well information on EU policies in CLLD and information on local development programmes in various states. Information on other international events concerning local development has also been introduced. Several original articles were posted in this period including: “Resilience and its Core Principles – The key to Sustainable Rural Development?”, “CLLD: Challenges and opportunities in 2014-2020 and beyond”, “Strengthening communities and regions in Mali” and “Climate change and urban development at the edge of the Sahara desert”.
3. **Actions to influence policy and practice and promote local development.** LDnet aims to influence and contribute to policy and practice on the Community-Led Local Development agenda in European Structural and Investment Funds, offering a critical perspective. Activities to pursue this in 2016-2017 were as follows:
  - LDnet delivered a workshop related to CLLD at the European Week for Cities and Regions 2016, hosted by the Committee of the Regions. As in previous years, the workshop was fully booked and included a good cross-section of participants from various Member State, policy makers, practitioners and researchers. This workshop provided a critical perspective on achieving social inclusion in CLLD in the context of results-oriented approaches in ESI programmes. It took the form a debate, moderated by Urszula Budzich-Tabor, and included contributions from Greece, Sweden, Poland and Ireland. It addressed the challenges of achieving social inclusion while maintaining the results-oriented approach, addressing different themes in social inclusion: migration, activation of most disadvantaged groups, integration through entrepreneurship, social inclusion in multi-funded CLLD in rural development.

- Preparation of the workshop theme and planning delivery for EWCR 2017. It was agreed that this should be delivered in collaboration with ELARD. The theme for 2017 is “Communities as change agents: local development in the EU beyond 2020”. It will provide an opportunity to showcase different aspects of local development and debate how CLLD can address current and new challenges facing the EU up to 2020 and beyond.
- It was also agreed to develop links and find opportunities to cooperate with the Regional Studies Association. This would facilitate connection between researchers (RSA) and the practice of local development (LDnet) and would be mutually beneficial. While it was not feasible for an LDnet member to attend the RSA conference, the RSA and LDnet will co-host a networking event after the LDnet / ELARD workshop in EWCR 2017. Haris Martinos has also contributed a post on the RSA blog.

#### 4. Projects:

- In 2017, LDnet participated in a proposal to Horizon 2020, under on the theme of Cultural heritage of European coastal and maritime regions (CULT-COOP-07-2017), led by Lead Partner, Professor Phivos Mylonas, Ionion University, with partners representing experience of island communities in both northern and southern Europe. It is addressed to “preservation of small and medium sized islands cultural heritage” (PREDICT). The proposal was successful in the Stage 1 selection. A full proposal was prepared and submitted in September 2017. The decision on this is expected by February 2018. LDnet’s role is focused on the exploitation of the research results and its share of the budget is € 200,000 (100% grant).
- In cooperation with HAWK Göttingen under ERASMUS+, LDnet has sponsored an internship to undertake a project on the “Circular Economy”. The intern was hosted from July to September 2017 in FARNET’s offices in Brussels. A draft report on the circular economy, with links to a range of resource materials and information on themes in the circular economy has been prepared and is available for comment on the LDnet website.

5. Over the last 12 months, one **Executive Committee meeting** was held on skype. Development of the proposal for EWCR 2017, website development and content, contribution to PREDICT proposal and to internship project on the circular economy were undertaken by email communication.

6. **Financial information:** The only expenditures incurred in this period were € 800 towards the costs of the internship and € 80 for the hosting of the LDnet website. No income was received in this period. The amount of € 6,882 remains in the bank account of the association.

7. **Issues for discussion** at the General Assembly 2017 include the following:

- Priorities, activities and resources for next year.
- Further exploitation of the research undertaken on the circular economy and CLLD.
- Cooperation with other networks and organisations – opportunities and outputs.