



# Integrating gender equality into Community-Led Local Development (CLLD). Insights from LEADER and Local Action Groups

Raquel Pastor Carretero

Policy Expert in Rural and Territorial Development at AEIDL

[rpc@aeidl.eu](mailto:rpc@aeidl.eu)



# Content

1. Gender equality as a cross-cutting objective
2. LEADER approach and Community-Led Local Development
3. LEADER and Gender equality
4. Challenges and recommendations

## 1. Gender equality as a cross-cutting objective

2. LEADER approach and Community-Led Local Development

3. LEADER and Gender equality

4. Challenges and recommendations

# Milestones

	Key Instrument	Status of Gender Equality	Primary focus	Key obligations
Pre - 1999	Directive 86/613/EEC (1986)	Equal Treatment Principle for specific groups	Self-employed & assisting spouses (incl. agriculture)	Ensure <b>non-discrimination</b> in access/conditions; Examine spouse protection issues
2000 - 2013	Treaty of Amsterdam (1999) Dir 2010/41/EU (2010)	Horizontal Principle/Mainstreaming + Strengthened Equal Treatment	All EU policies; Self-employed & assisting spouses/partners	<b>Integrate gender perspective</b> ; Ensure access to social protection (incl. maternity) for spouses
2014 – 2022	EAFRD Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013	Cross-cutting Objective (Rural Development)	Rural Development Programmes (EAFRD)	Describe <b>promotion of gender equality</b> in RDPs
2023-2027	CAP Strategic Plans Reg (EU) 2021/2115	Specific Objective (part of SO 8)	CAP Strategic Plans (EAGF & EAFRD)	Assess <b>gender needs</b> ; Design interventions contributing to SO 8 (incl. gender) in CAP Plans

## 1. Gender equality as a cross-cutting objective

2. LEADER approach and Community-Led Local Development

3. LEADER and Gender equality

4. Challenges and recommendations

# Milestones

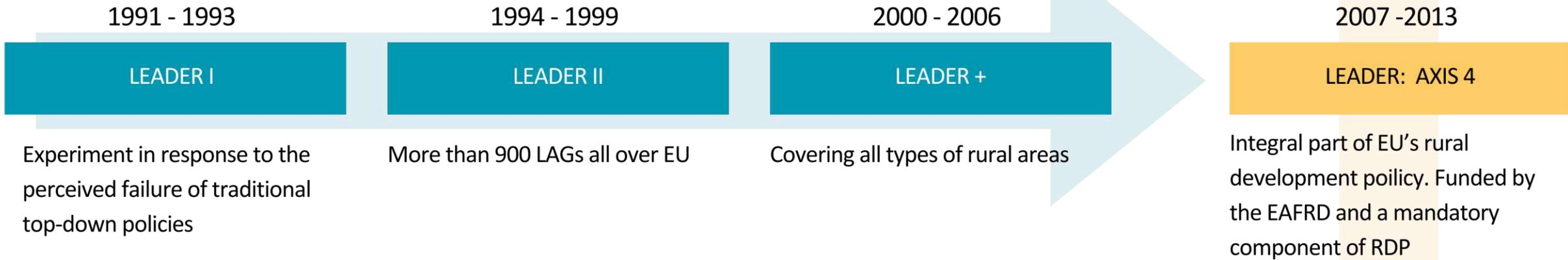
	Key Instrument	Status of Gender Equality	Primary focus	Key obligations
Pre - 1999	Directive 86/613/EEC (1986)	Equal Treatment Principle for specific groups	Self-employed & assisting spouses (incl. agriculture)	Ensure <b>non-discrimination</b> in access/conditions; Examine spouse protection issues
2000 - 2013	Treaty of Amsterdam (1999) Dir 2010/41/EU (2010)	Horizontal Principle/Mainstreaming + Strengthened Equal Treatment	All EU policies; Self-employed & assisting spouses/partners	<b>Integrate gender perspective</b> ; Ensure access to social protection (incl. maternity) for spouses
2014 – 2022	EAFRD Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013	Cross-cutting Objective (Rural Development)	Rural Development Programmes (EAFRD)	<b>Describe promotion of gender equality in RDPs</b>
2023-2027	CAP Strategic Plans Reg (EU) 2021/2115	Specific Objective (part of SO 8)	CAP Strategic Plans (EAGF & EAFRD)	<b>Assess gender needs; Design interventions contributing to SO 8 (incl. gender) in CAP Plans</b>

# Key points

- The European Union's regulatory framework concerning gender equality in agriculture and rural development has undergone a **profound transformation over the past four decades**.
- **Initial targeted measures addressing specific legal inequalities** faced by self-employed women and assisting to spouses; **to the establishment of gender mainstreaming as a fundamental Treaty principle**.
- Subsequent **CAP reforms** progressively embedded gender considerations more explicitly:
  - 2014-2020 CAP period marked the first explicit operationalization, designating gender equality as a cross-cutting objective for Rural Development Programmes. This required Member States to describe **how they would pursue the objective, formalising its relevance** but leaving considerable discretion in implementation.
  - The current CAP (2023-2027) incorporates gender equality directly into Specific Objective 8. This elevates it to **a core policy aim**, linked to mandatory needs assessments, intervention design within national CAP Strategic Plans, and the overall performance framework.

# Evolution of LEADER

- 1. Gender equality as a cross-cutting objective
- 2. LEADER approach and Community-Led Local Development**
- 3. LEADER and Gender equality
- 4. Challenges and recommendations



2023 -2027

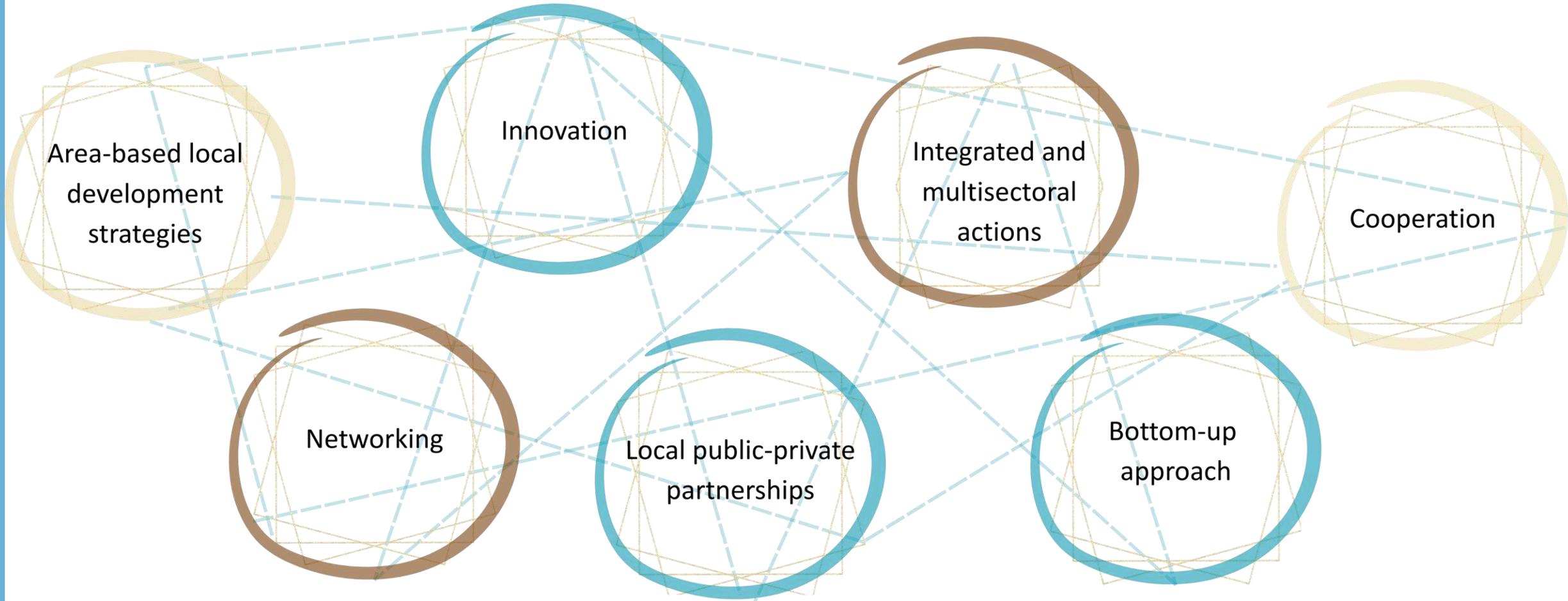
## LEADER: COOPERATION

The CAP Strategic Plans regulation (EU) 2021/2115 defines LEADER as community-led local development (CLLD) referred to in Article 31 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 and part of the cooperation intervention defined under article 77.

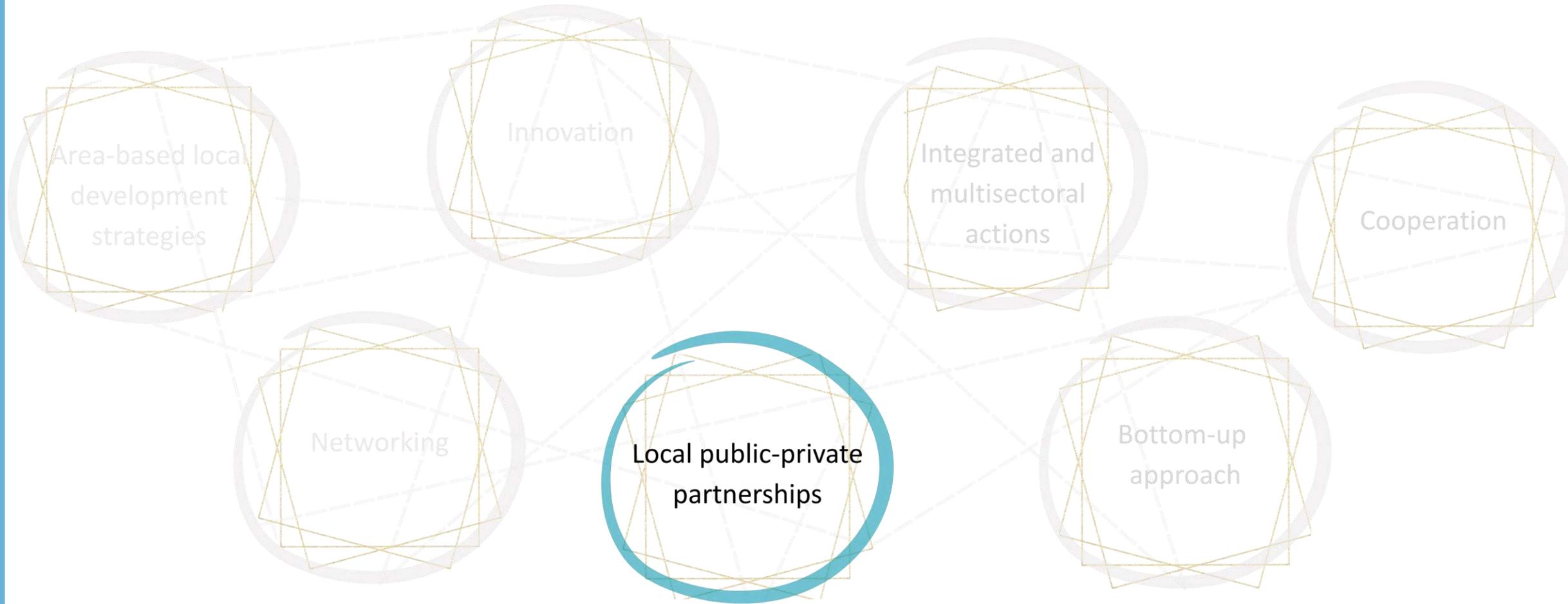
At the CSP level, MMSS have programmed LEADER mainly under SO8. According to the intervention logic of the CSP, LEADER can also contribute to the achievement of other SOs.



# The seven features of LEADER



# The seven features of LEADER

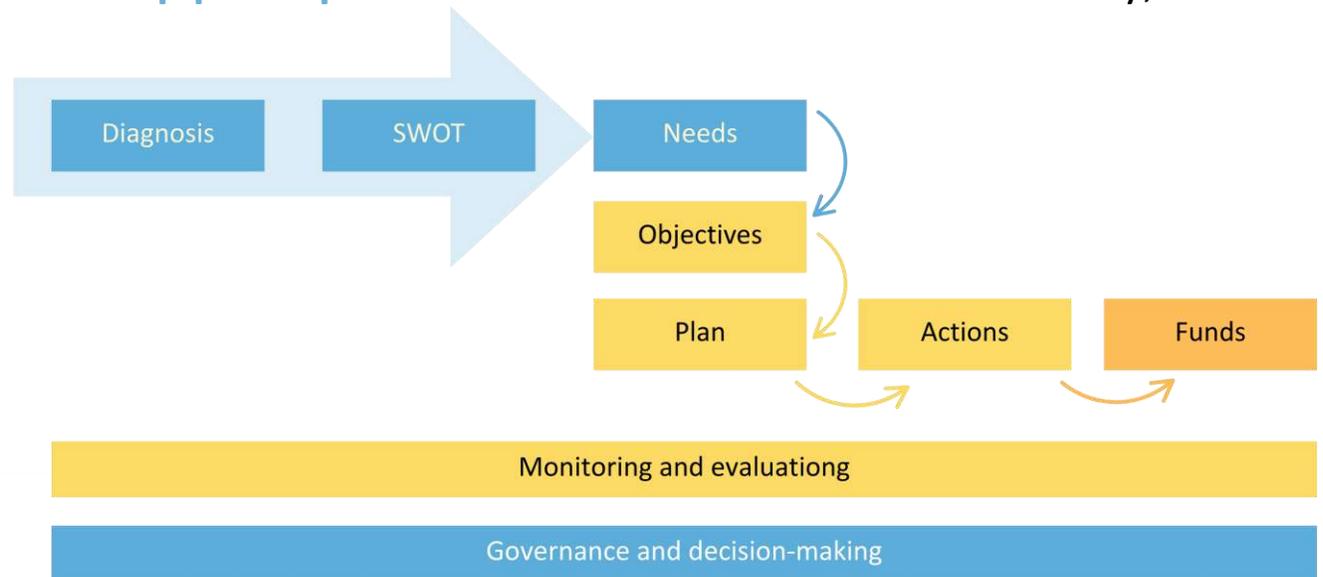


# Local Action Groups

- LAG a non-profit association; a network of local partners and through **its Strategy** and activities promote links between local actors and others in the development chain and area
- **Well balanced and representative** of the existing local interest groups and be drawn from the different socio-economic sectors in the area
- At the decision-making level, **the private partners and associations must make up at least 51%** of the local partnership
- LAG as an instrument combining **broad bottom-up participation** of local citizens and the community; with a top-down support and funding

## Strategy

Cross-cutting:  
gender equality,  
climate change  
and innovation



# What LAGs can do?

- Gender equality as a cross-cutting item to include in:
  - **Diagnosis: recognising data gap is important**
  - **Collecting sex-disaggregated data:** quantitative data broken down by sex on demographic, employment, education, income, access to services, participation in local decision-making, land ownership
  - **Qualitative assessment:** explore the 'why' behind the numbers. Understanding differing needs, priorities, access to resources (time, money, information...), power dynamics within households and communities and prevailing social norms and stereotypes.
  - **Stakeholder consultation:** actively engage with diverse groups of women and men, including marginalized groups and bodies responsible for promoting gender equality
  - **Identifying key gender gaps and opportunities:** synthesise the findings to pinpoint specific areas where gender inequalities exist and where LEADER interventions could promote greater equality or empowerment.

# What LAGs can do?

- Gender equality as a cross-cutting item to include in:

- **Project funding and implementation**

- Gender criteria in calls for proposals
- Gender sensitive project selection criteria
- Promoting women's participation:
  - Using channels and methods specifically designed to reach women (women's associations, community health workers, specific social media groups);
  - Offering pre-application workshops or mentoring specifically for potential women applicants or women-led groups;
  - Addressing practical barriers and promoting role models (successful women-led projects)

Does the project explicitly address gender equality objectives outlined in the LDS?

Does the project contribute to broader goals like work-life balance, equal pay, women's entrepreneurship, social inclusion, or combating gender-based violence (if applicable)?

Does the proposal set specific, measurable gender equality goals for the project?

Are expected results disaggregated by sex?

Does the project proposal demonstrate an understanding of relevant gender inequalities/needs in the territory (based on LDS gender analysis or own analysis)?

# What LAGs can do?

- Gender equality as a cross-cutting item to include in:
  - **Monitoring and evaluation**
  - Collective gender-disaggregated data: composition of LAG membership, decision-making bodies and staff; tracking the sex of individuals applying and receiving funding, data on the gender composition of project teams and leadership
  - Assessing gender impact: accountability and added value of this approach. For example:
    - Contribution to reduction in local gender pay gap in specific sectors targeted by LEADER
    - Increased % of women holding decision-making positions in the LAG territory (beyond LAG board)

1. Gender equality as a cross-cutting objective
2. LEADER approach and Community-Led Local Development
- 3. LEADER and Gender equality**
4. Challenges and recommendations

# In a nutshell...

## Governance bodies with a gender equality focus

Balanced participation in decision making bodies: promote gender parity, establish recommendations to ensure female representation, encourage active participation

## Monitoring and evaluating with gender perspective

Gender disaggregated data in all monitoring reports: beneficiaries, jobs created, participation in activities...  
Specific gender equality indicators to measure progress. Mid - term and final evaluations with gender lens

## Prioritisation and selection criteria for operations

Positive scoring for projects that promote gender equality (led by women, female employment, work-life balance, specific needs of rural women).  
Guidance and support on how to incorporate gender perspective

## Specific projects aimed at promoting equality

LAG projects (awareness-raising campaigns; publications and videos; leadership workshops); cooperation projects (collaboration with other entities, inter-territorial cooperation projects)

Internal training within the LAG: capacity building + gender perspective in all project cycle life

Inclusive communication: non-sexist, gender-inclusive language

Participation space: safe and accesible spaces for womens' participation in consultation and decision-making

# We need to work on...

- Lack of capacity and knowledge linked to the **insufficient understanding of gender equality concepts**, gender analysis methodologies, gender budgeting, gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation, and how to practically apply these tools in the LAG context.
- **Data gaps**: reliable, comprehensive, and consistently collected sex-disaggregated data at the local level hinders effective gender analysis, baseline setting, monitoring, and impact evaluation.
- **Under-representation** of women in decision-making.
- Fostering a **gender-sensitive evaluation culture** in LAGs and resources constraints: dedicated resources, staff time, budget, etc., for expertise or specific activities, funding for data collection and analysis.
- **Structural barriers in rural areas continue to constrain gender equality** (social and economic factors), such as unequal access to land, credit, or markets; limited/inadequate childcare or eldercare infrastructure impacting women's time and work-employment opportunities; occupational segregation; and sustainable work-life balance challenges.

# Strategies

1. Gender equality as a cross-cutting objective
2. LEADER approach and Community-Led Local Development
3. LEADER and Gender equality
4. Challenges and recommendations

- MA to LAGs: strengthen **tools and support**, providing LAGs with clear, practical guidance (drawing from EIGE, EU CAP Network, etc.), and accessible training opportunities on all aspects of gender mainstreaming in LEADER/CLLD context.
- MA&LAGs: develop robust **systems for collecting, analysing, and reporting** sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators. Fostering evaluation culture + gender-evaluation culture
- MA&LAGs: actively participate in National/Regional Networks and EU CAP Network activities focused on gender equality. **Share experiences, challenges, and good practices** with other LAGs to foster mutual learning
- MA&LAGs: identify, document and disseminate **concrete examples of successful gender strategies and projects** implemented by LAGs across the EU. *Empower the replicability.*
- LAGs: implement **targeted strategies to reach diverse groups of women**. Offer capacity-building support (such as workshops, mentoring) for potential women applicants and leaders.

# Thank you!



[www.aeidl.eu](http://www.aeidl.eu)



[@AEIDL.asbl](https://www.facebook.com/AEIDL.asbl)



[@AEIDL](https://twitter.com/AEIDL)



[/aeidl-european-association-for-information-on-local-development/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/aeidl-european-association-for-information-on-local-development/)