



## LEADER drives forward Moldova's rural policy

Moldova's national parliament adopted on 20 February the European LEADER approach as the basis of national rural policy.

*Márta Márczis (AEIDL)*



The Republic of Moldova will be the first non-EU country to implement the LEADER approach as the basis for its rural development policy and programming. The approach will be supported with national funds.

Parliament voted on 20 February to modify several legislative acts to allow the implementation of the LEADER approach and the Local Action Groups to be financed by public sources.

The first, EU-funded LEADER/CLLD pilot programme, which was carried out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), began in Moldova in 2015. This [360-degree development process](#) helped multiply the pilot results and fostered a wide-reaching national dialogue on rural development policy and the implementation of the LEADER approach. Its experiences provide a model for other countries in the Black Sea region.



*Beekeeping project supported by the LEADER pilot programme.*

The pilot programme had five crucial activities, which were implemented in parallel:

- (1) advocacy work aiming to inform, motivate and develop the capacity of national and regional decision-makers during the three-year pilot process;
- (2) preparation and dissemination of a legal study, including cases to introduce the legal framework of the LEADER implementation in 12 EU countries and analyses to identify the necessary changes in the Moldovan national legislation that make it possible to establish and finance Local Action Groups (LAGs);
- (3) adaptation of the LEADER approach and creating a handbook on implementing LEADER;
- (4) building the necessary expert capacity to implement the LEADER approach in the country; and
- (5) facilitation of the creation and the functioning of the first LEADER LAGs and the setting up of the legally registered national LEADER network.

The first Moldovan LAGs were launched in 2017/2018; currently, more than 30 LAGs cover around 30% of rural areas, with more expected.

One of the main achievements in Moldova is governmental recognition of the LEADER approach, which allows LAGs to be financed from the state budget. This is the result of the cooperation and dialogue established among public institutions, development partners and local people. This co-creative approach has played an important role in shaping rural development policies in the country.

Marina Albu, member of AEIDL and President of the [National LEADER Network in Moldova](#), said: *"The historic moment of the positive decision of the national parliament wouldn't have happened*

*without the efforts and the trust granted by the president of the parliamentary commission's committee for agriculture and food industry, as well as the decision-makers of the ministry of agriculture, regional development and environment."*

She also thanked the villages of Moldova and the Local Action Groups for their commitment and support, along with the partners and experts who have believed in this programme and contributed to its implementation. The next step will be the drawing up of the legislation that will establish a special status for LAGs and stimulate the economic development rural areas.



*AEIDL's members visiting a small LEADER-funded local museum.*

## **2<sup>nd</sup> European LEADER conference in Moldova**

The Moldovan LEADER experience will be shared at the second edition of the EU-Moldova LEADER Conference that will held on 13-16 May 2020. This multicultural event will bring together people from different rural regions of Moldova at the Palace of the Republic in the centre of Chişinău.

The event is also aimed at stakeholders in other non-EU and EU countries, who will benefit from the opportunity of discussing the same approach as well as the wider rural development challenges across Europe. The conference will serve as a platform for the exchange of non-EU and EU LEADER experiences, offering the chance to network with peers.

Field visits to the selected Moldovan LAG territories will allow attendees to learn about the issues faced by rural areas as well as some specific results that LEADER activities have achieved in recent years.

An open air fair displaying the distinctive characteristics of almost all Moldovan LAGs and the field visits will show how rural Moldova can be redesigned and how it can become a source of inspiration.

Moldova can be an example of how the EU approach can contribute to the development of EU neighbouring countries.

The Moldovan LEADER Network will make available contact details, registration possibilities and the conference agenda in the coming weeks.

*28/02/2020*