

CLLD IMPLEMENTATION IN SLOVENIA 2014-2020

- view of program implement by LAGs

Aleš Zidar

Predsednik Društva za razvoj slovenskega podeželja

President of Slovenian Network for Rural Development (NGO)

Slovenian network for Rural development (DRSP)

The SNRD is an association (network) that connects stakeholders in the Slovenian rural area and is a representative network of Slovenian LAGs.

It is a non-governmental network for rural development in the public interest and a strong interlocutor to the representatives of the state administration, which was particularly evident in the preparation for the programming period 2014-2020 and for the new programming period.

It plays a strong role in the preparation of the main documents of the rural development program in Slovenia, especially on Leader and now CLLD.

Always we had the problem of understanding and complying with our proposals, which came from program providers - a bottom-up approach.



Approach of the SNRD - Slovenian LAG Network

Within the SNRD, the LAG's is covered by the CLLD Commission, whose members have regularly participated in the work of the managing board of SNRD.

It is very important that all Slovenian LAGs, who regularly informed us about problems on the ground, supported us almost 100% in carrying out joint activities.



The programming period 2014-2020

At **national level**, active participation in the process of preparation of the RDP 2014-2020 (meetings, tribunes, media, 2nd SRP – since 2010).

Our proposals were mainly aimed at improving the LEADER program (late payments, problems related to co-financing, municipal play of role, legal form of LAGs, state support).

We spoke with the Ministries of Agriculture and Finance, Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture and other important institutions on behalf of the LAG.

At **EU level** - networking with European organizations – especially PREPARE and ELARD and public discussions on linkage between funds.

Participation in DG REGIO consultations about bottom-up approach and multi funding system.

The proposals were partially successful, which is why in Slovenia we amended the Regulation of CLLD several times during the programming period.



The programming period 2014-2020

Based on the members' suggestions, the SNRD :

- Prepared the views and proposals of the LAG for the effective implementation of the CLLD program;
- Represented all Slovenian LAGs in discussions and negotiations with ministries and other PRP institutions;
- Mediate the exchange of CLLD experience between LAGs (workshops, forums, roundtables, etc.) - for LAG Lead Partners and LAG members;
- Cooperation with the Rural Network and MA in the evaluation and improvement of the CLLD program (membership of the Rural Network Steering Committee).

Some important activities

Preparation of a sample of both key documents for the LAG's operation during this programming period: LAG Partnership Agreements and LAG Management Contracts with a Lead Partner.

Preparation of a uniform model of the Rules on the implementation of the public call for project selection in the framework of the implementation of SLR, of which the Public call and criteria for project selection are an integral part.

Amendments for the CLLD Implementing Regulation.

Connecting and sharing project ideas for projects of cooperation on national level.

Organization of various bilateral conferences with LAGs from different countries (Italy, Czech Republic, Portugal, Croatia, Austria) - exchange of experience and better cooperation of LAGs.

Some important problems

Too long considering of requests for co-financing for managing of the LAG, requests for co-financing of projects and too long disbursement of funds - long bureaucratic procedures of the Payment Agency.

An important twist - the replacement of the Director of the Agency in 2018, which completely reversed the approach to handling claims. Previously, controls were aimed at reducing and rejecting claims, now they are aimed at successfully resolving errors and better paying off funds - a focus on achieving results.

The problem of implementing three funds under CLLD. Each fund has its own rules, requirements and method of implementation. Proposal for the next programming period - Single Fund (one Managing Authority), reduction of administrative barriers.

Pre-financing of project implementation, simplified financing scheme for small projects up to 5.000,00 €

Future of CLLD in Slovenia

Leader / CLLD addresses all areas of the countryside and directly addresses the challenges covered by all four EU funds.

From the LAG's point of view, it is important that all funds be included in the financing of the program, as this will only ensure the full coverage of the countryside and the possibility for the local population to directly decide on the priorities and development goals of the local area.

We did an Assessment of the implementation of the LEADER / CLLD program and the operation of the SNRD in the 2014-2020 programming period in order to obtain data for preparation for the new programming period.

One of the issues was related to the implementation of social content, which is directly financed by the Social Fund and is also financed through the CLLD program.

The analysis confirmed that the inclusion of the Social Fund in the CLLD was necessary.



Future of CLLD in Slovenia

Facts:

- 81 approved operations have social content (out of 323), which is about 25% of all approved operations.
- On average, 3 operations with social content were approved at the LAG level.
- 62% of the LAGs replied that more than 50% of the approved operations achieved the maximum score in the social criterion - inclusion of vulnerable groups when assessing the application.

Future of CLLD in Slovenia – conclusions from SRP

For CLLD to implement well, there are a one thing to do:
Simplify the implementation of the program.

The SNRD and delegates from Slovenian rural parliament strongly argues that the following objectives must be achieved:

- Participation of all four EU funds with the aim of distributing as many European finances as possible under the LEADER / CLLD principles (5% CAP + 5% regional funds)
- Establishment of a single system - common managing authority and single financial system (paying authority)
- CLLD Coordinating Committee - Greater mandate and Participation of the LAG representative on the CLLD Coordination Committee
- Uniform rules for all funds included in the CLLD – Simplify of the CLLD program



Future of CLLD in Slovenia – conclusions from SRP



Simplify of the CLLD program

- After final approval of project, pre-financing approved after signing the contract (first payment 30% before implementation, interim payment 30%, settlement after project completion).
- LEADER / CLLD exempt from the Agriculture Act (special rules)
- Reinforcement of the Regional Development Fund for pre-financing (lending)
- More requests (to schedule request on a monthly basis, for example)
- Defining deadlines for reviewing and validating applications for LAGs and inspection bodies.
- Coordination of the verification method between the LAG and the inspection body.



Future of CLLD in Slovenia – conclusions from SRP



Simplify of the CLLD program

Involving multiple sectors in the implementation of the CLLD:

- NGOs in rural areas and the economic sector
- Rural youth: education, labor market - more technical and financial incentives for new jobs, social / family life - giving young people a place to create social life, housing policy

Programming period 2021 - 2027: Initiate procedures as soon as possible to develop new local development strategies (national and local level) - good practice example: Finland.

The state must accelerate the process of preparing Local Development Strategies.

Thank you for your attention!

Aleš Zidar

Slovenian network for rural development

www.drustvo-podezelje.si

ales.zidar@drustvo-podezelje.si

+386 31 339 789

