



European LEADER Association for Rural Development – AISBL

Finnish Presidency January 2011 – December 2013

ELARD LAG's Staff Exchange Program - General instructions

The aim of the present program is to offer LAGs that are members of ELARD a possibility for reciprocal, international staff exchange in order to promote their formation and training as well as exchange of experiences, know-how and new ideas. The overall objective of the program is to promote transnational cooperation between LAGs, to enhance the dissemination of the LEADER methodology, its different instruments and applications and good European practices.

The recommendation is that the staff members of the participating LAGs spends one to two weeks in the other country in order to have enough time to get profound picture of the work done in the partner LAG. Nevertheless, the LAG's are free to define the length of the exchange according to their mutual preferences, needs and situation.

The exchange is reciprocal meaning that the same LAG both sends and receives a visitor. As a general rule each LAG participating sends one member of their staff to exchange. With a mutual decision, the partners can decide to have several staff members taking turns during the exchange. The length of the exchange period should however be the same in both countries in order to avoid imbalances in the cost incurring to the partners for hosting the visitor.

The objective of the exchange is, not only to offer the staff members a possibility to meet their colleagues in another EU country, but also to create more tangible results e.g. to carry out analysis of common challenges that the territories of the partner LAGs face, introducing the solutions both LAGs have found in terms of carrying out successful and innovative projects. For this purpose the visitors are asked to keep an exchange diary (see below). Another important aim is to establish contacts with the local stakeholders and partners of the host LAG.

Before leaving for the Exchange

When your LAG has received an exchange partner proposal from ELARD **please inform us on your decision whether or not you accept it as soon as possible**. If taking this decision will take a long time, e.g. because of the schedule of the board meetings in your LAG, please inform us about this as well.

After sending your positive confirmation, you should wait for ELARD's confirmation with regard to the answer of your potential partner. If both LAGs accept the proposal, the new partners can get in direct contact with each other in order to agree on the time when the exchanges will be carried out and on the exchange programs. Once the partners have settled on the dates and programs they should make sure to notify ELARD as well.



COOPERATION AGREEMENT

After both partners have approved the partner proposal, ELARD will send by email to one of the partners the cooperation agreement form outlining the general responsibilities of the parties involved. The partners should complete this form by defining the time of the exchanges. This document should be printed in three copies which should be sent with the signature of the LAG's chairman to the partner LAG to be signed (the addresses will be found in the partner proposal). Once the chairman of the partner LAG also signs the agreement, one copy should be sent back to the other LAG and another copy to ELARD (1, Square de Meeus, 1000 Brussels, Belgium).

FINANCIAL ISSUES

The LAG sending its staff member to the exchange takes care of the travel arrangements and covers the travel costs, insurances needed as well as the daily allowances of its employee.

The host LAG organizes the accommodation and takes care of the possible accommodation costs. Family accommodation is recommended as it can lower the cost substantially as well as offer a nice opportunity for the visitor to get familiar with the local culture and way of life.

Please make sure that your LAG has available the financial resources needed.

Who covers what?

LAG sending the visitor	Travel costs, insurances and daily allowances of its employee.
Host LAG	Accommodation costs

EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Before the starting date of the exchange, the host LAG needs to provide their visitor information on the accommodation arrangements and a draft program for the exchange. **A well planned program is the cornerstone of a successful exchange and its importance cannot be over-stressed.** As a basis for planning the program, you can find information on the interest of your future visitor from the partner proposal and, of course, by directly contacting your partner. **In order to make the planning of the program easier for your partner, you should provide them as much information as possible on how you would wish to spend the time in the exchange (both work and leisure).**

The exchange program does not need to be final, but it is fundamental to have a preliminary plan on how the exchange time is going to be spent, which projects will be presented and which stakeholders



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will be met etc. Naturally, the exchange program can be modified during the exchange if needed. **For the comfort of your guest it is also important to provide her/him information, in advance, on how the accommodation will be organized.** When you have finished the exchange program, please send it by email both to your partner and to ELARD (elard@elard.eu).

IF YOUR LAG AT ANY STAGE OF THE PROCESS DECIDES TO WITHDRAW FROM THE PROGRAM IT IS UTMOST IMPORTANT TO INFORM ELARD AND YOUR POSSIBLE PARTNER ABOUT THIS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!

During the Exchange

The aim of the exchange is to offer the staff member of your partner LAG a possibility to get a profound picture of the work of your LAG and to learn about your ongoing projects. For you, hosting the visitor can offer a great opportunity to reflect on your own work and look at the development questions you face from a new perspective.

According to her/his interest, your visitor should have a chance to meet and establish contacts with your LAG's local and regional stakeholders (e.g. local population, entrepreneurs, authorities, schools). When appropriate, it is also possible and recommendable to organize activities in cooperation with the other LAGs close to your region, especially in case they have ongoing projects which may be interesting for your visitor. It is desirable that the visitor is also given a chance to get familiar with the region and its culture.

The participants of the pilot program found the general exchanges on the host LAGs work highly valuable. Finding similarities and differences in the issues faced by the partner LAGs as well as getting an "outsiders point of view" to the major development issues of the host LAG was said to have brought out many "new ideas for resolving old problems". Similarly, meeting different partners, learning about the ongoing projects and discovering closely local issues were experienced as very beneficial, also from the point of view of further cooperation. Some LAGs had positive experiences on incorporating language training in the program. In one country where several LAG's were carrying out exchanges at the same time, a meeting was organized between the different LAGs and their visitors.

LEARNING DIARY

In order to enhance the learning process the staff member visiting is asked to keep an exchange diary (learning diary – see the separate instructions). The diary is not only meant to record the daily activities but it should include the visitor's reflections about how the new information, knowledge or skills gained during the exchange can be used upon his return home. The diary does not necessarily need to be very



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long, but it is very recommendable to keep a record on what has been learned and discovered during the exchange. In order to best benefit from the writing process, the best and easiest way is to draft it gradually during the exchange period.

After the Exchange

After returning home please send to ELARD (elard@elard.eu) your learning diary, the license to publish it on ELARD website and the evaluation forms that have been sent to you.

Timeline of the ELARD Staff Exchange Program, 3rd Edition:

May 31 st 2013	Call for applications will be closed
June-July 2013	Contacts with ELARD: Partner identification, partner proposals
July-December 2013	Contacts between the partners: Planning of the exchange programs, practical organizations of the exchanges, actual exchanges.

We wish you a very interesting and fruitful exchange!