LEADER LAG Survey 2017

Working Paper

Findings at Member State level

Member State: Czech Republic

Table of Contents

Introduction

The ENRD Contact Point (ENRD CP) launched a survey of LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs) in November 2017 to explore on the ground experiences of implementing LEADER from the LAG perspective. Drawing on the ENRD LAG database over 2,200 LAGs were contacted and 710 confidential responses were received from 27 EU Member States making this the largest and most comprehensive LEADER survey conducted. LAGs from 19 national and 70 regional Rural Development Programme (RDP) 'territories' responded. Germany, France, Spain, Czech Republic and Austria provided over 50% of the total responses.

The online survey included 38 questions in four sections and the questionnaire was provided in six languages. Each section addressed several key themes. The main chapters of this report follow the structure of the questionnaire and are as follows:

1. Basic LAG data.
2. LEADER principles.
3. LEADER operation.
4. LEADER improvements.

This working paper has been prepared by the ENRD Contact Point and its content does not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission. The order of results presented for each question is consistent with the ranking from the EU level report to enable direct comparison Please note that this report **does not present a comparative analysis** but where clear and significant differences are evident between the Member State LAG responses and the overall survey sample these have been highlighted.

In this paper all references to LAGs relate specifically to those LAGs who responded to the survey.

Explanatory points

The questionnaire used a multiple choice format allowing respondents to choose the answers most appropriate to their LAG's circumstances. The text of some questions has been simplified in the charts that follow. The full text of each question and all possible answers are listed in the sections below.

The total number of responses for each question is recorded individually as response levels varied between questions throughout the survey.

Questions three, five and six of the original questionnaire are not relevant for this paper being primarily for survey management and have been omitted. Where necessary a limited level of data cleaning has been undertaken to ensure consistency and correct obvious errors.

Please note that there is a degree of variation in the number of responses by RDP and question. Where relevant this should be taken into account when considering or interpreting the wider implications of the findings for some questions. It is not possible to reflect regional RDP differences e.g. the date of RDP approval although this may explain some of the variations within regionalised Member State responses. For example, the date of RDP approval will influence the timing of LAG selection and approval and subsequent LAG actions.

Basic Implementation Data

Question 1

Please select your country

- Czech Republic (CZ)
- 54 LAGs responded, representing 7.6% of total LAG responses
- 30% of Czech LAGs responded to the survey

Total Number of Responses 54

Question 2

Please select your Rural Development Programme (RDP)

- CZ has one national programme.

Total Number of Responses 53

Question 4

Respondents were asked to identify which position they held within the LAG.

- LAG Manager
- Other LAG staff
- LAG Chair /President
- LAG Board Member

Total Number of Responses 54

Respondents' Position

2%

18%

80%

- LAG Manager
- Other LAG Staff
- LAG Chair/ President
- LAG Board Member
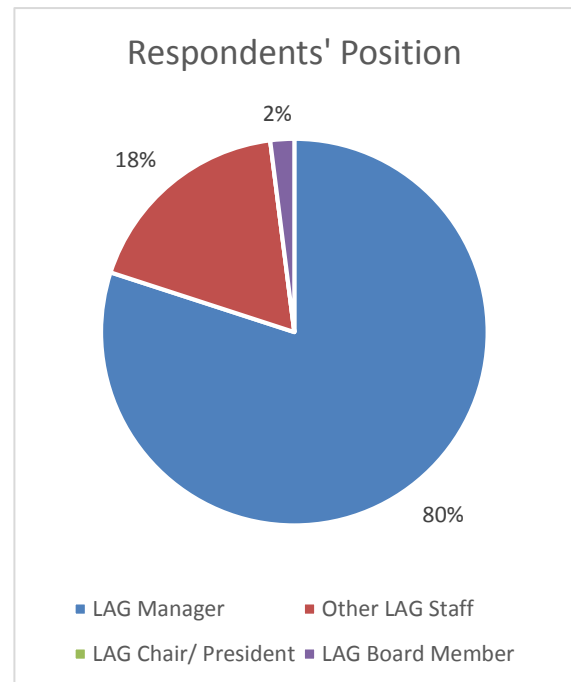
Question 7

In which period did your LAG first begin its operation? Please select the option that applies to you. (i.e. point from where there is a significant degree of continuity in membership or territory)

- Newly established LAG (2014-2020 Programming Period)
- the 2007-2013 Programming Period
- LEADER+
- LEADER II
- LEADER I

Total Number of Responses 54

- A higher proportion of responding Czech LAGs became operational under LEADER + than the EU sample (33% vs 19%).

- The largest grouping, 44% began operation during the 2007-2013 Programme. This is also larger than the EU position of 34%.

First Period LAG became Operational
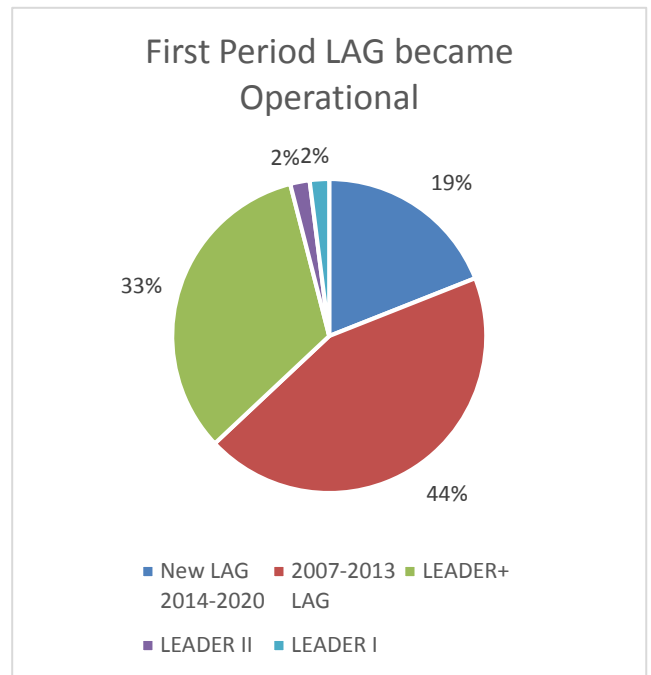
Question 8

When was your LAG formally selected in this (2014-2020) Programming Period?

- 2014
- First half of 2015 (Jan - June)
- Second half of 2015 (July – December)
- First half of 2016
- Second half of 2016
- First half of 2017
- Second half of 2017

Total Number of Responses 54

Time LAGs were Formally Selected in 2014-2020 Programme Period

Category	Value
2014	9%
First half of 2015	2%
Second half of 2015	4%
First half of 2016	2%
Second half of 2016	18%
First half of 2017	39%
Second half of 2017	26%
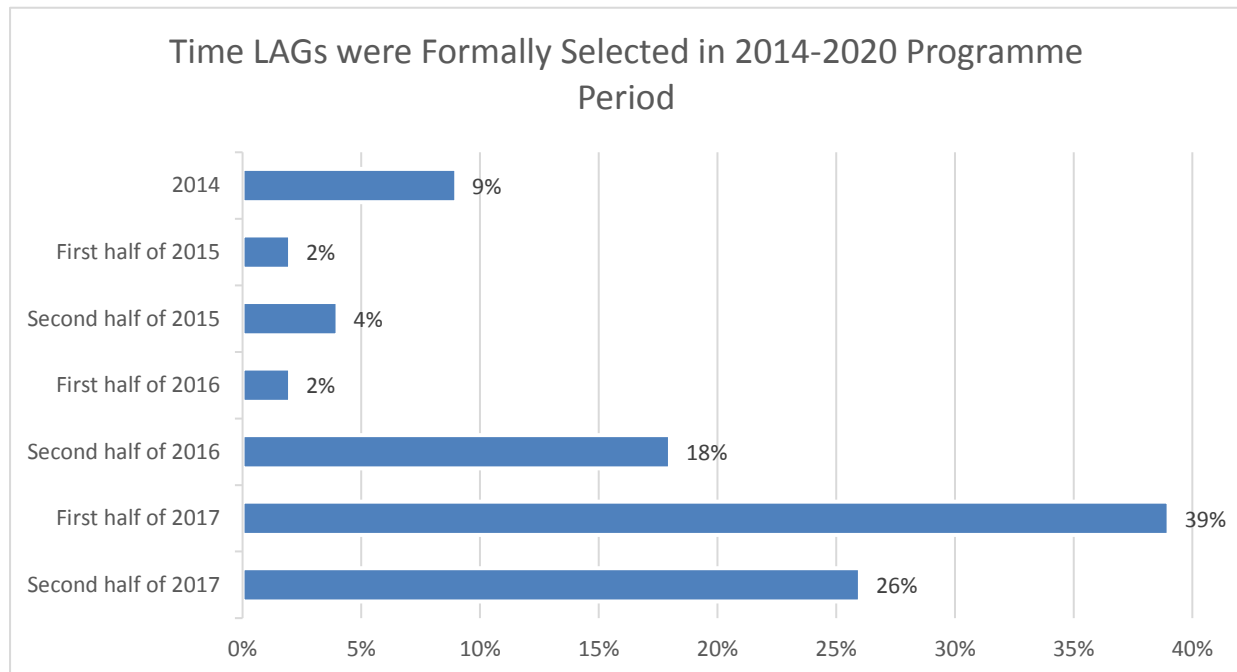
- At EU level 59% of LAGs had been selected by the end of 2015 as opposed to 15% of Czech LAGs.

- 55% of the Czech respondents were formally selected in 2017, while only 10% of the EU sample was selected as recently as this.

Question 9

When did / will your LAG first launch a call for projects?

- First half of 2015
- Second half of 2015
- First half of 2016
- Second half of 2016
- First half of 2017
- Second half of 2017
- 2018

Total Number of Responses 54

Timing of LAGs Launch of First Call for Projects

Period	Percentage
First half of 2015	
Second half of 2015	
First half of 2016	
Second half of 2016	8%
First half of 2017	35%
Second half of 2017	37%
2018	20%
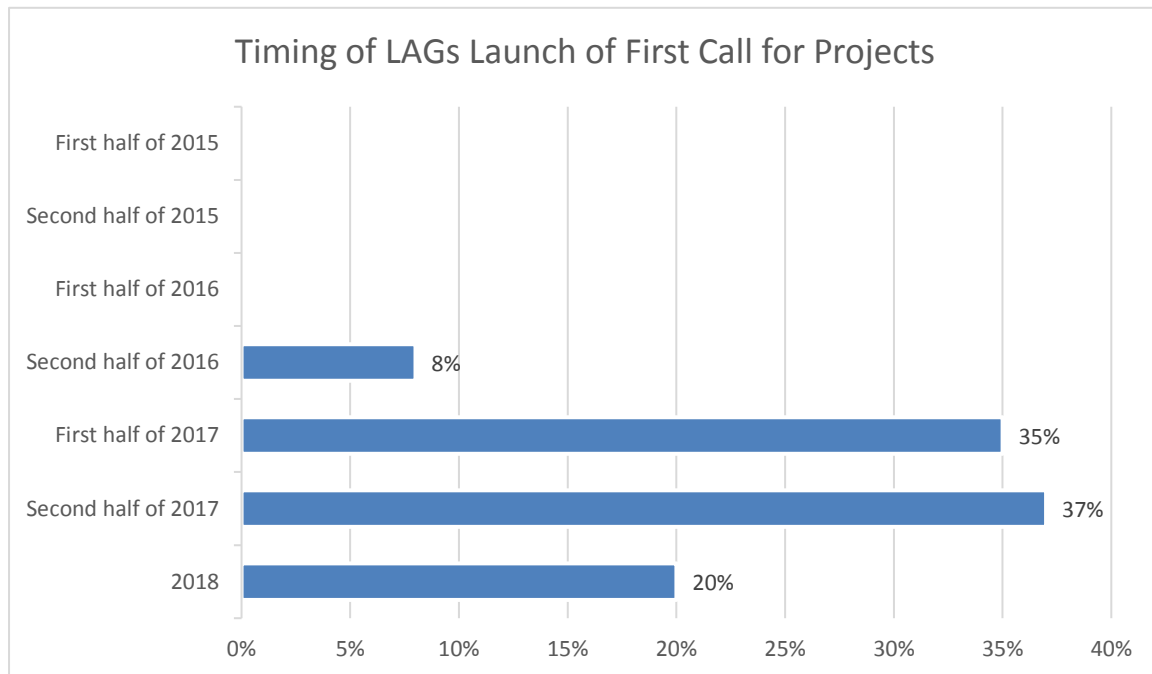
- First calls for projects were launched by Czech LAGs from the second half of 2016 onwards, by which time 51% of the EU sample had already launched their first calls.

- As such, a much higher proportion of responding Czech LAGs launched their first calls in the first and second halves of 2017 than European survey participants (35% vs 11%, and 37% vs 12%).

LAG Funding

Question 10

Please select all the European Structural and Investment Funds that your LAG uses to financing your Local Development Strategy (in addition to EAFRD).

- European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)
- European Social Fund (ESF)
- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
- None of the above (only EAFRD)

Please note, the percentages of the chart are higher than 100% due to the multiple choice character of this question.

Total Number of Responses 53

LAG Use of ESI Funds

- EMFF
- ESF
- ERDF
- only EAFRD

2%

88%

90%
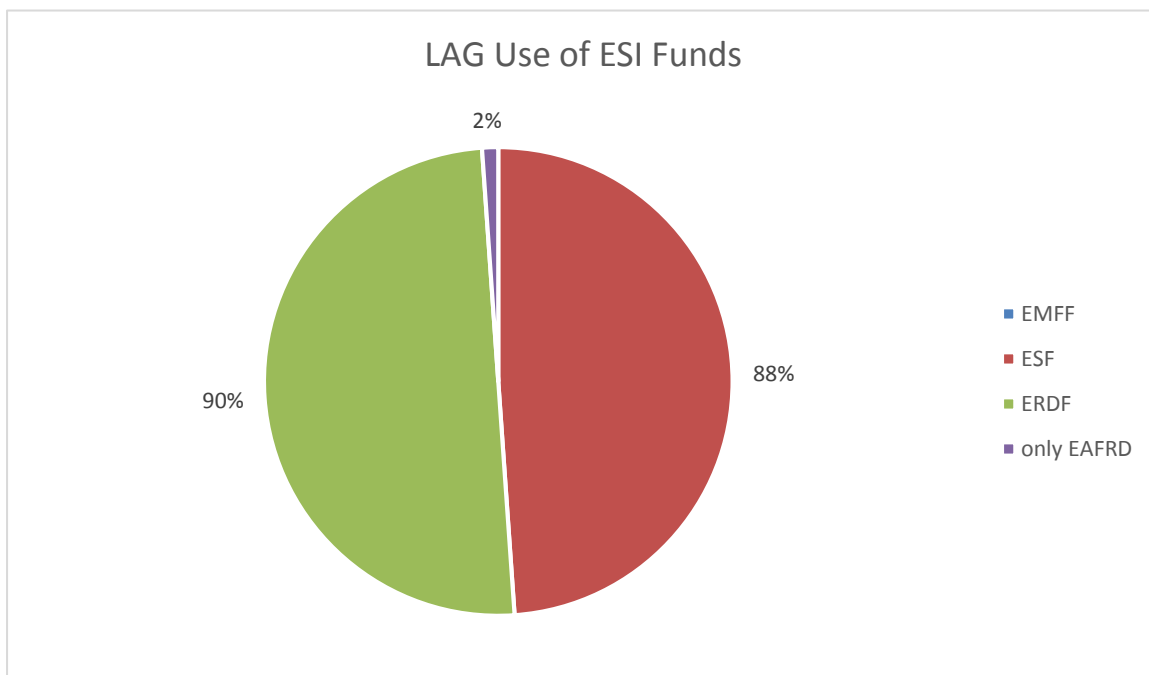
- A very significantly smaller proportion of Czech LAGs reporting use only EAFRD (2%) than at EU level (67%).

- The vast majority of Czech LAGs utilise ESF (88% vs 16% EU) and ERDF (90% vs 25%) in conjunction with EAFRD.

Question 11

What is your LAG budget (total public expenditure Euro, i.e. EAFRD plus all other EU and domestic public funds) for the 2014-2020 Programming Period? Please provide your best estimate if data are not available.

- < €500,000
- €500,001 – 1,000,000
- €1,000,001 – 1,500,000
- €1,500,001 – 2,000,000
- €2,000,001 – 3,000,000
- €3,000,001 – 4,000,000
- €4,000,001- 5,000,000
- €5,000,001 – 10,000,000
- >€10,000,000

Total Number of Responses 53

Range of Budgets from Responding LAGs

Legend:
- >€10,000,000
- €5,000,001 - 10,000,000
- €4,000,001 - 5,000,000
- €3,000,001 - 4,000,000
- €2,000,001 - 3,000,000
- €1,500,001 - 2,000,000
- €1,000,001 - 1,500,000
- €500,001 - 1,000,000
- <€500,000
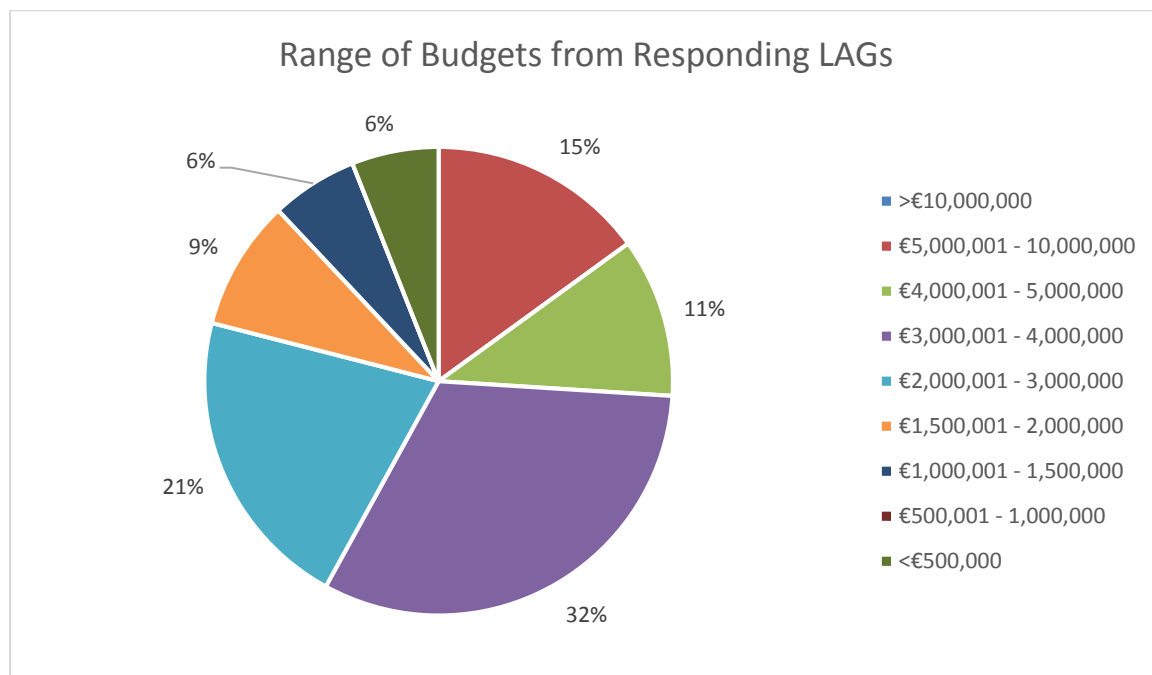
- The range of budgets from responding Czech LAG is largely similar to that of the EU sample, the main variation is a larger percentage of Czech LAGs with a budget between €3m - €4m (32% vs 22%).

Question 12

What % of this total LAG budget is allocated to running costs and animation?

- < 10%
- 10 – 13%
- 14 – 16%
- 17 – 20%
- 21 -25%

Total Number of Responses 53

- The proportion of Czech LAGs who report a running costs and animation budget allocation of 21-25% is considerably smaller than that for the EU (6% vs 31%).

- A significantly larger proportion of Czech LAGs (73%) have a running costs and animation allocation under 16% than is reported at EU level (36%).

% of LAG Budget Spent on Animation & Running Costs

Legend: ■ <10% ■ 10-13% ■ 14-16% ■ 17-20% ■ 21-25%
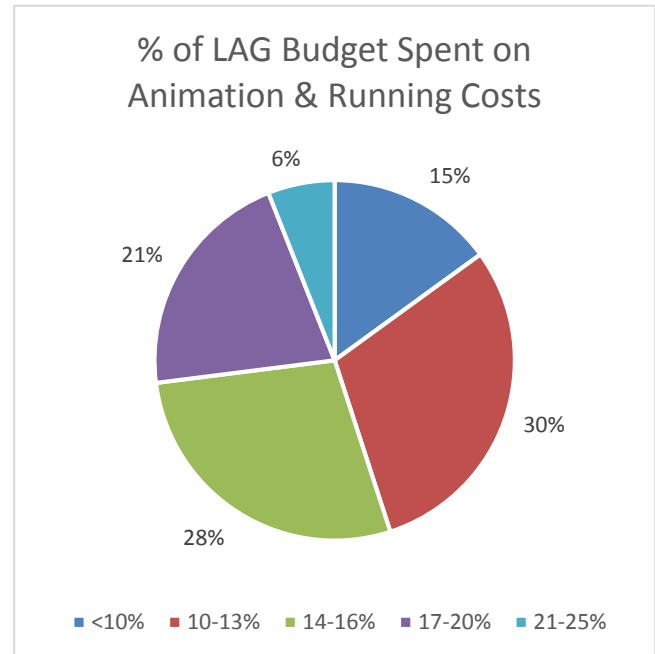
LEADER Principles

Question 13

How important are each of the following LEADER principles for your LAG in delivering real benefits on the ground? (Please rate each option from 1= not at all to 5 = essential).

- Area-based local development strategies intended for well-identified sub-regional rural territories.
- Local public-private partnerships (local action groups).
- Bottom-up approach with decision-making power for local action groups concerning the elaboration and implementation of local development strategies.
- The 49% limitation on voting rights of any single interest group.
- The 50% requirement for non-public sector votes in project selection.
- Multi-sectoral design and implementation of the strategy based on interaction between actors and projects of different sectors of the local economy.
- Implementation of innovative approaches.
- Implementation of cooperation projects.
- Networking of local partnerships.

Total Number of Responses 51

Relative Importance of LEADER Principles

Principle	Essential	Important	Medium importance	Low importance	Not at all
Bottom-up approach	71%	22%	4%	2%	1%
Local public private partnerships	48%	36%	6%	6%	4%
Area based LDSs	32%	46%	12%	8%	2%
Networking	50%	28%	16%	2%	4%
Multi-sectoral	20%	33%	37%	6%	4%
Innovative approaches	8%	39%	27%	20%	6%
50% requirement in project selection	18%	18%	32%	22%	10%
Cooperation projects	26%	42%	18%	10%	4%
49% limitation on voting rights	22%	12%	36%	22%	8%

- Proportionately, more Czech LAGs felt that many LEADER Principles were less essential. However, in some cases such as 'bottom-up approach', and 'local public private partnerships', a slightly higher proportion of Czech respondents felt that these were 'important' making the overall 'essential and important' responses similar to those of the EU sample.

- A higher percentage of Czech LAGs felt that LEADER principles such as 'innovative approaches', (20% vs 10%), '50% requirement in project selection' (22% vs 10%), and '49% limitations on voting rights' (22% vs 14%)were of lower importance in comparison to the European level.

Question 14

To what extent is your LAG able to implement the following elements of the LEADER approach? (please rate each option from 1-5, where 1= not at all, 5 = fully)

- Area-based local development strategies intended for well-identified sub-regional rural territories.
- Local public-private partnerships (local action groups).
- Bottom-up approach with decision-making power for local action groups concerning the elaboration and implementation of local development strategies.
- Multi-sectoral design and implementation of the strategy based on interaction between actors and projects of different sectors of the local economy.
- Implementation of innovative approaches.
- Implementation of cooperation projects.
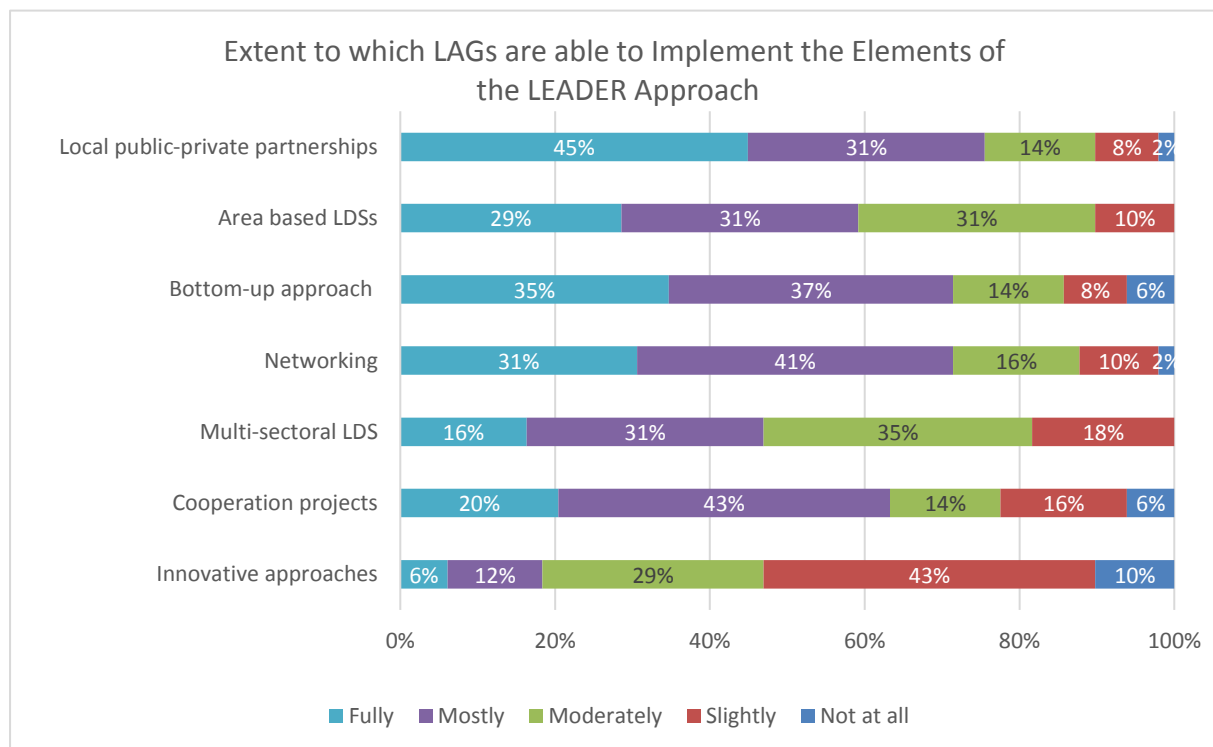- Networking of local partnerships.

Total Number of Responses 49

Extent to which LAGs are able to Implement the Elements of the LEADER Approach

- Compared to the EU sample, there is generally a smaller proportion of LAGs in the Czech Republic who feel that they are 'fully' or 'mostly able' to implement the elements of the LEADER approach.

- 18% of Czech LAGs felt that they can 'fully' or 'mostly' implement innovative approaches compared to 54% of European LAGs.

Question 15

Please consider the statements below and for each statement select the option that best reflects your practical experience from this scale:1 = disagree strongly, 2 = disagree, 3 = don't know, 4 = agree, 5 = agree strongly.

- LEADER implementation procedures are able to meet local development needs in a flexible, innovative way.
- The project application procedure is designed to be accessible and encourage local stakeholders to participate in LEADER.
- The LAG has overall control of setting selection criteria and defining calls for projects.
- The LAG is able to use qualitative criteria and local knowledge to inform project selection decisions.
- The decision-making power of LAGs is not overly limited by Rural Development Programme (RDP) level procedures and regulations.
- Your LAG's ability to implement the LEADER approach is constrained by bureaucracy and administrative burden.
- Project holders` ability to implement LEADER projects is not overly constrained by the level of bureaucracy and administrative burden.
- Eligibility conditions for LEADER beneficiaries are appropriate and proportionate to the amount of support sought.
- LAG funding for the animation of local stakeholders and networking is sufficient.
- Administrative and reporting requirements limit your LAG's capacity for animation and other development oriented activities.

Total Number of Responses 50

Aspects of LEADER Implementation as seen by Local Action Groups

Statement	Agree strongly / agree	Disagree strongly / disagree	Don't know
LAG's ability to implement LEADER constrained by bureaucracy & admin	94%	6%	
LAG is able to use qualitative criteria & local knowledge for project selection decisions	68%	20%	12%
Admin & reporting requirements limit LAG's capacity for animation & local development	76%	12%	12%
LAG has overall control of setting selection criteria & defining calls for projects	38%	56%	6%
LAG funding for the animation of local stakeholders & networking is sufficient.	58%	24%	18%
Implementation procedures are able to meet local development needs in a flexible, innovative way	64%	34%	2%
Eligibility conditions for LEADER beneficiaries are appropriate & proportionate to support sought	22%	52%	26%
Project application procedure is accessible & encourage local stakeholders to participate in LEADER	38%	52%	10%
Decision-making power of LAGs is not overly limited by RDP level procedures & regulations	22%	70%	8%
Project holders` ability to implement LEADER projects is not overly constrained by bureaucracy & admin burden	16%	70%	14%

- The responses from Czech LAGs are mostly similar to those of the EU sample. However, Czech respondents are markedly more satisfied with the implementation procedures being able to meet local demand in a flexible and innovative manner (64% vs 45%).

- They are less satisfied than their EU peers with regard to the appropriateness of the eligibility conditions for LEADER beneficiaries and associated support, whereby only 22% of the Czech LAGs agreed with the relevant survey statement in contrast to 39% at the EU level.

Question 16

The LEADER approach can deliver qualitative local effects which are distinctive from those of other rural development activities. The importance of these effects and how easy they are to achieve may vary by LAG.

Please rank how important and how achievable each of the possible effects is for your LAG according to the following scale. 1= Very important and achievable, 2 = Very important and difficult, 3 = Important and achievable, 4 = Important and difficult, 5 = Not important but achievable, 6= Not important and difficult.

- Directly addressing local issues and opportunities.
- Strengthening stakeholder participation in local partnership and its governance.
- Strengthening economic linkages among local actors.
- Strengthening public private partnership.
- Unpaid work carried out by LAG members.
- Mobilising local / endogenous resources (human, physical, financial).
- Improving local community social capital and cohesion.
- Improving local individual's knowledge, skills and capacities.
- Finding / implementing innovative solutions to local problems.
- Cooperating with other LAG territories.

Total Number of Responses 50

Importance and Achievability of LEADER Effects
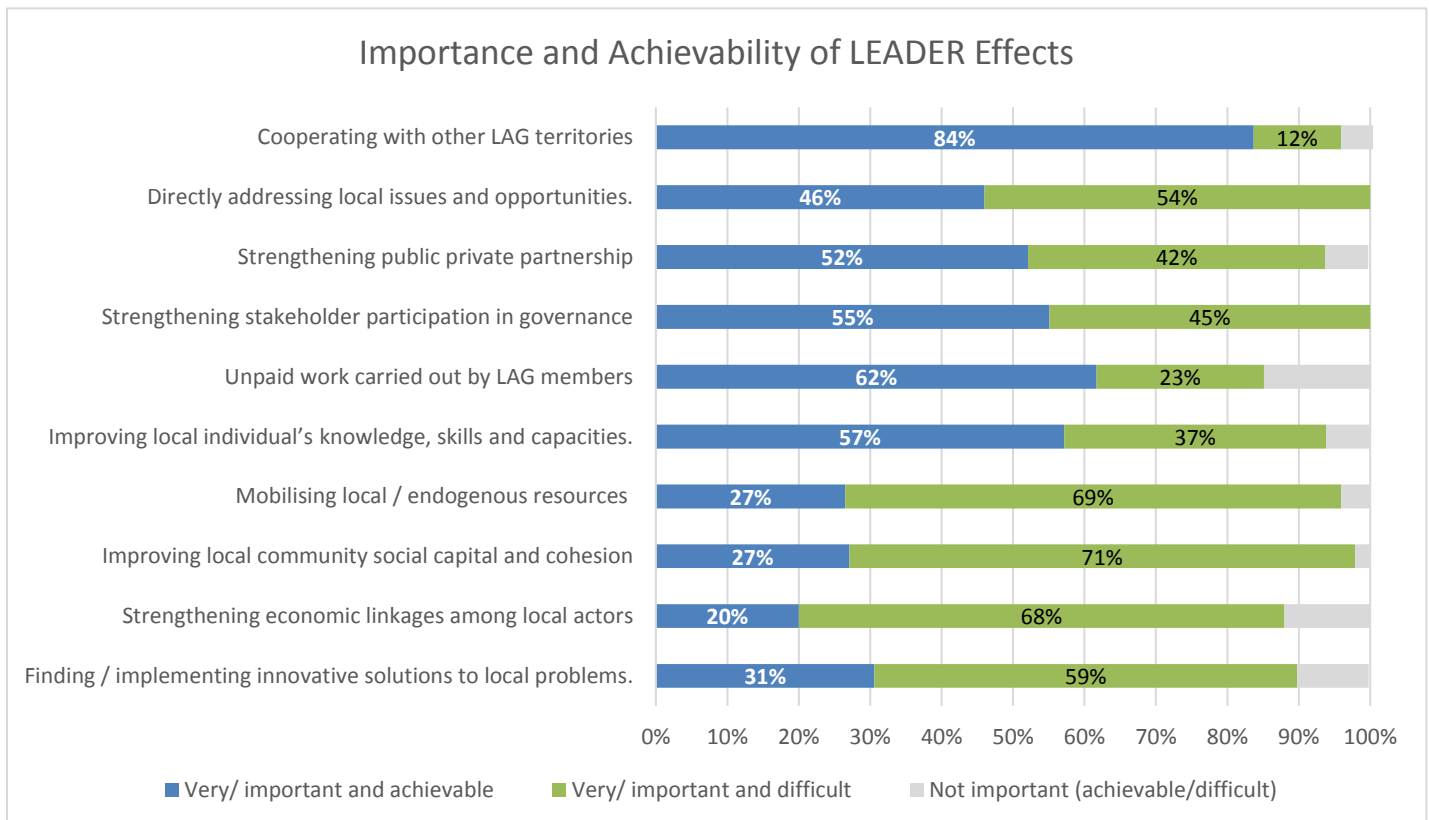
- Czech LAGs responses were largely similar to those of the EU sample, however they felt more positive about 'cooperating with other LAG territories' than their European peers (84% of Czech LAGs rated this as a 'very important/important and achievable' task, in contrast to 67% at EU level).

- Relatively more Czech than EU LAGs felt that a number of 'very important/important' tasks were difficult to achieve. These included 'directly addressing local issues & opportunities', 'mobilising local / endogenous resources', 'improving local community social capital & cohesion', and 'strengthening economic linkages among local actors'.

LEADER Operation

Question 17

What level of effect have the following factors had on the implementation of LEADER in your LAG territory? (for each option enter either 0 = not applicable, 1 = very negative, 2 = negative, 3 = neutral, 4 = positive, 5 = very positive)

- Reduction of funding for LEADER under the RDP.
- Increase in funding for LEADER under the RDP.
- RDP level limitations on possible Local Development Strategy themes, eligibility or selection criteria.
- Level of Managing Authority/Paying Agency conditions, reporting requirements.
- Time taken to approve selected projects.
- Audit and possible sanctions.
- The balance in implementation procedures effects between reducing risk and encouraging innovative solutions.
- Effects on local decision-making of final approval of projects by the managing authority or paying agency.
- Percentage of LAG budget available for running costs and animation.
- Limitations on staff (continuity, skills, number).
- Continuity of LAG membership.
- Possibility of multi funding.

Total Number of Responses 48

Level of Effects on LEADER Implementation

Category	Very Negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very Positive
Level of MA/PA conditions, reporting requirements	19%	43%	32%	4%	
Time taken to approve selected projects	33%	25%	29%	8%	2%
The balance between reducing risk and encouraging innovative solutions	19%	29%	33%	13%	
Audit and possible sanctions	19%	31%	42%		
Reduction of funding LEADER under RDP	44%	27%	19%		
RDP level limitations on possible LDS themes, eligibility or selected criteria	45%	30%	15%	9%	2%
Effects on local decision making of projects by the MA/PA	8%	35%	42%	6%	4%
Limitations on staff	19%	23%	48%	6%	
% of LAG budget available for running costs and animation	10%	15%	48%	27%	
Possibility of multi funding	2%	6%	21%	42%	27%
Continuity of LAG membership	2%	1%	25%	52%	15%
Increase in funding for LEADER under RDP		2%	17%	38%	25%

Legend: ■ Very Negative ■ Negative ■ Neutral ■ Positive ■ Very Positive

For the purposes of improving the clarity of the analysis the 'not applicable' responses have been removed from the chart.

- LAGs in the Czech Republic were more negative regarding the effects of a 'reduction of funding' (71% scored very negative / negative) than the EU sample (55%). This was also the case with regard to 'RDP level limitations on possible LDS themes' (75% vs 53%).

- The responding Czech LAGs were, however, much more positive than the EU average about the 'continuity of LAG membership' (67% vs 38%), and the 'possibility of multi-funding' (69% vs 37%).

Question 18

How have the following aspects changed for your LAG between the 2007 – 2013 and 2014-2020 Programming periods? (1 = significantly less than before, 2 = less than before, 3 = no change, 4 = more than before, 5 = significantly more than before) (routed for only those LAGs previously operational)

- Available budget.
- LAG territory.
- LAG population.
- Number of full-time equivalent employees.
- LAG / staff involvement in animation.
- LAG autonomy in decisions related to local development strategy design.
- LAG autonomy in decisions related to local development strategy implementation.
- Level of MA controls, reporting requirements etc.
- LAG freedom to develop innovative solutions.
- Proportion of non-public partners in the LAG.
- Direct involvement of LAG members in LDS implementation.
- Direct involvement of the LAG in other regional and territorial development actions or structures.

Total Number of Responses 45

LEADER Operation - Changes since 2007-2013

Aspect	Significantly / less than before	No change	Significantly / more than before	Not Applicable
Level of MA / PA controls, reporting requirements, etc.	18%	13%	60%	
LAG population	2%	56%	33%	
Proportion of non-public partners in the LAG		60%	29%	
Available budget	4%	13%	73%	
LAG territory		64%	27%	
Number of full-time equivalent employees	2%	24%	64%	
LAG / staff involvement in animation	7%	33%	51%	
Direct involvement of LAG members in LDS implementation	4%	56%	31%	
Direct involvement of the LAG in 'others'	9%	39%	43%	
LAG autonomy in decisions related to LDS design	44%	36%	9%	
LAG autonomy in decisions related to LDS implementation	56%	22%	13%	
LAG freedom to develop innovative solutions	49%	31%	9%	

Legend: ■ Significantly / less than before ■ No change ■ Significantly / more than before ■ Not Applicable

- The most significant difference between Czech respondents and the total sample is in relation to the available budget whereby 73% indicated this is 'more' or 'significantly more than before' in contrast to 30% in the EU sample.

- A greater proportion of Czech LAGs reported 'significantly more /more' 'increases in staff numbers' (64% vs 27%) and 'staff involvement in animation' (51% vs 26%) than their European peers.

- In comparison to the European level, more Czech respondents indicated that they have experienced reductions in 'LAG freedom to develop innovative solutions' (49% Czech vs 37% EU) and 'LAG autonomy in decisions related to LDS implementation' (56% Czech vs 33% EU).

Question 19

Please think about your day-to-day work in the LAG and rank the three types of activity which your LAG staff spend most time on overall on a scale of 1 − 3 where 1 = most time spent.

- Reporting to /working with LAG board and members.
- Supporting project development and implementation.
- Financial and administrative management of LAG and local projects.
- Reporting and communication with the Managing Authority and Paying Agency (including regional intermediaries).
- Animation, capacity building and training of local stakeholders (inc LAG members).
- Supporting innovation at the local level.
- Monitoring and reviewing the local development strategy.
- Developing /managing cooperation projects.
- Working with other LAGs, the regional/national rural network and the ENRD.

Total Number of Responses 46

Activities LAG Staff Spend Most Time On

Activity	1st	2nd	3rd
Supporting project development and implementation	12	11	6
Financial & administrative management of LAG and local projects	11	12	9
Reporting and communication with the MA/PA (including regional intermediaries)	16	11	8
Reporting to /working with LAG board /LAG members	2	1	6
Animation, capacity building and training for local stakeholders (inc LAG members)	2	6	4
Developing / managing cooperation projects.			3
Working with other LAGs, the regional/national rural network and the ENRD		2	4
Monitoring and reviewing the LDS	1	2	2
Supporting innovation at the LAG level	1	1	3
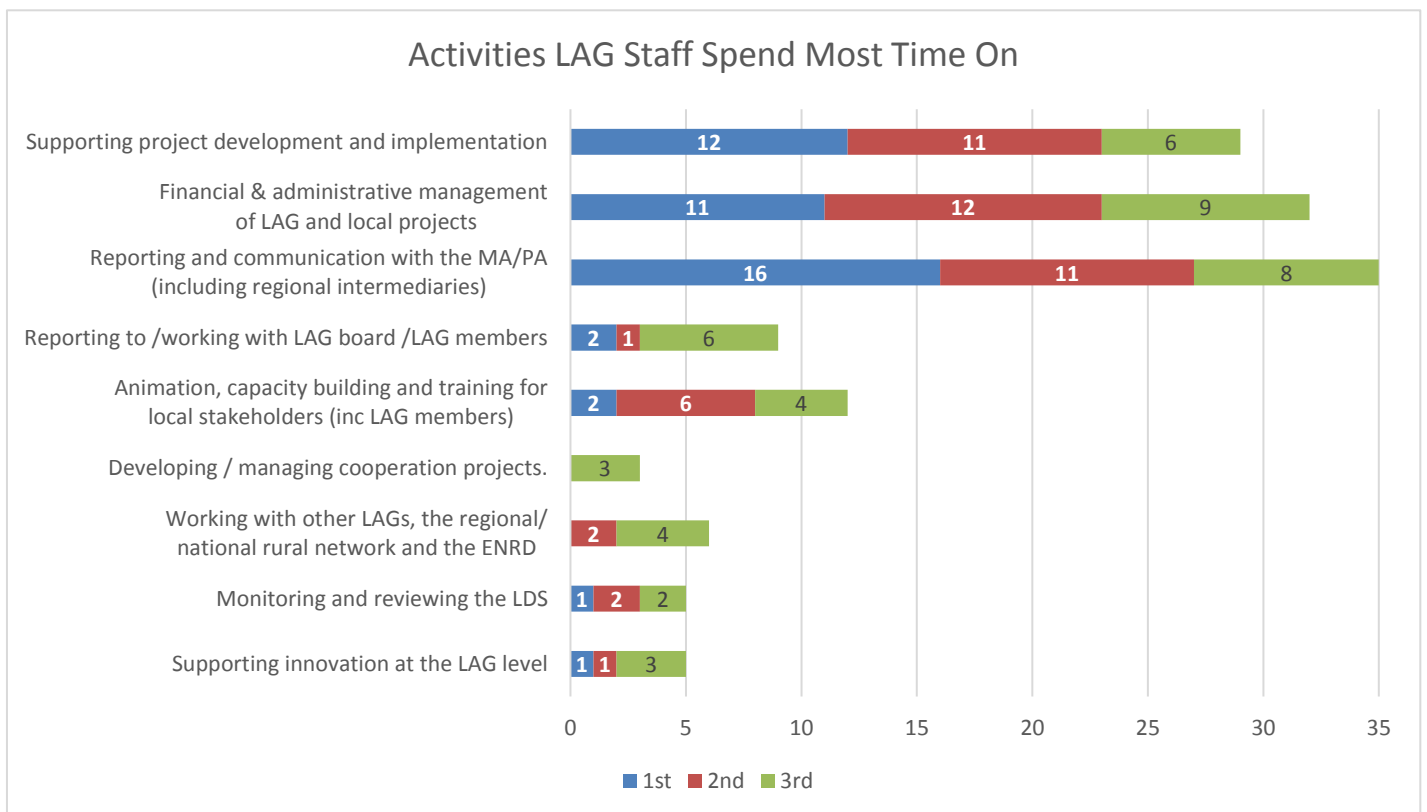
- The main difference is that more Czech LAGs indicated that 'reporting and communication with MA/PA' is most time consuming for staff, ranked third by other EU LAGs and that supporting project development and implementation ranked first in the EU sample ranked third in Czech Republic..

Question 20

Where would you like to be able to devote more of your LAG team`s time or resources in order to maximise the benefit of LEADER to your LAG territory? Please rank the three most important options below on a scale of 1 – 3 where 1 = most important.

- Reporting to /working with LAG board /LAG members.
- Supporting project development and implementation.
- Financial and administrative management of LAG and local projects.
- Reporting and communication with the Managing Authority and Paying Agency (including regional intermediaries).
- Animation, capacity building and training of local stakeholders (inc LAG members).
- Supporting innovation at the local level.
- Monitoring and reviewing the local development strategy.
- Developing /managing cooperation projects.
- Working with other LAGs, the regional/national rural network and the ENRD.

Total Number of Responses 46

Activities LAGs would like Staff to Devote More Time To
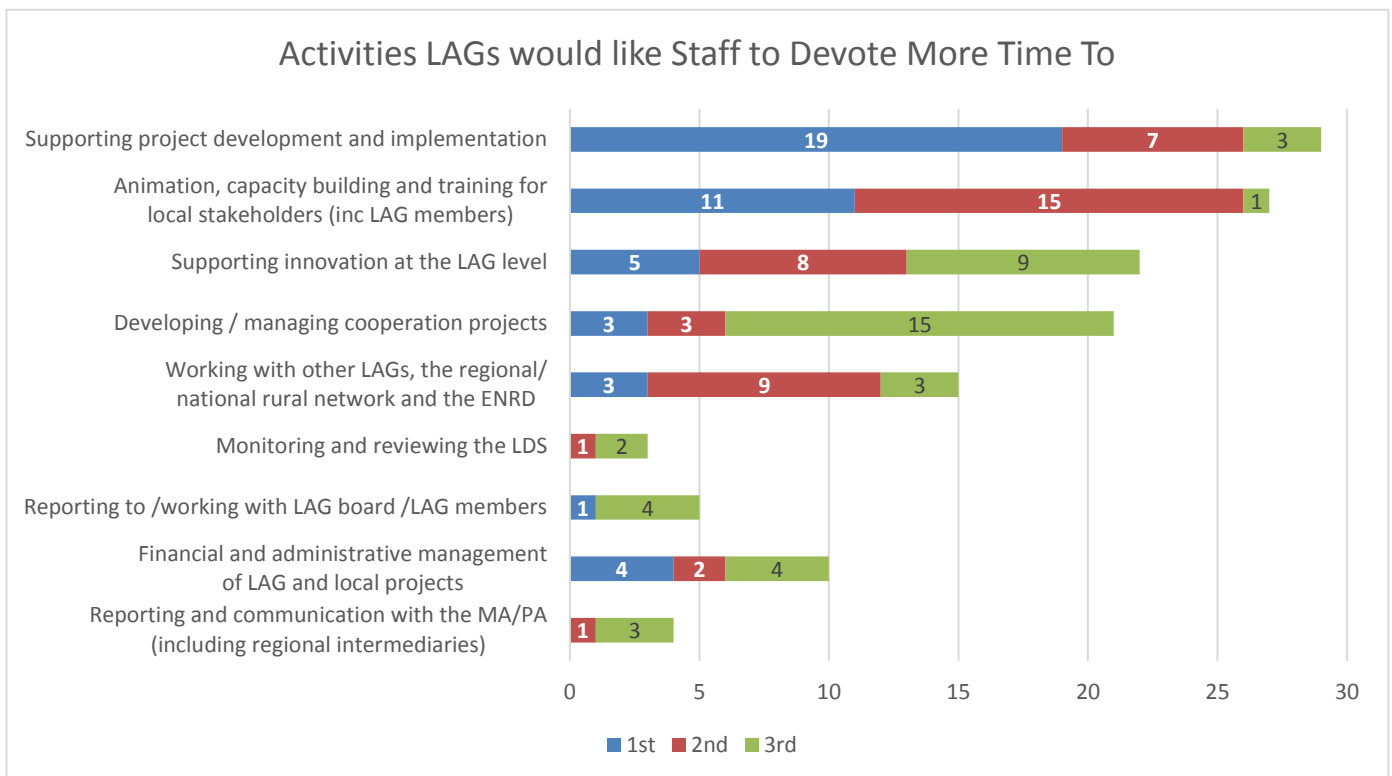
- There are no major differences here between the responses of the Czech LAGs and the wider EU sample.
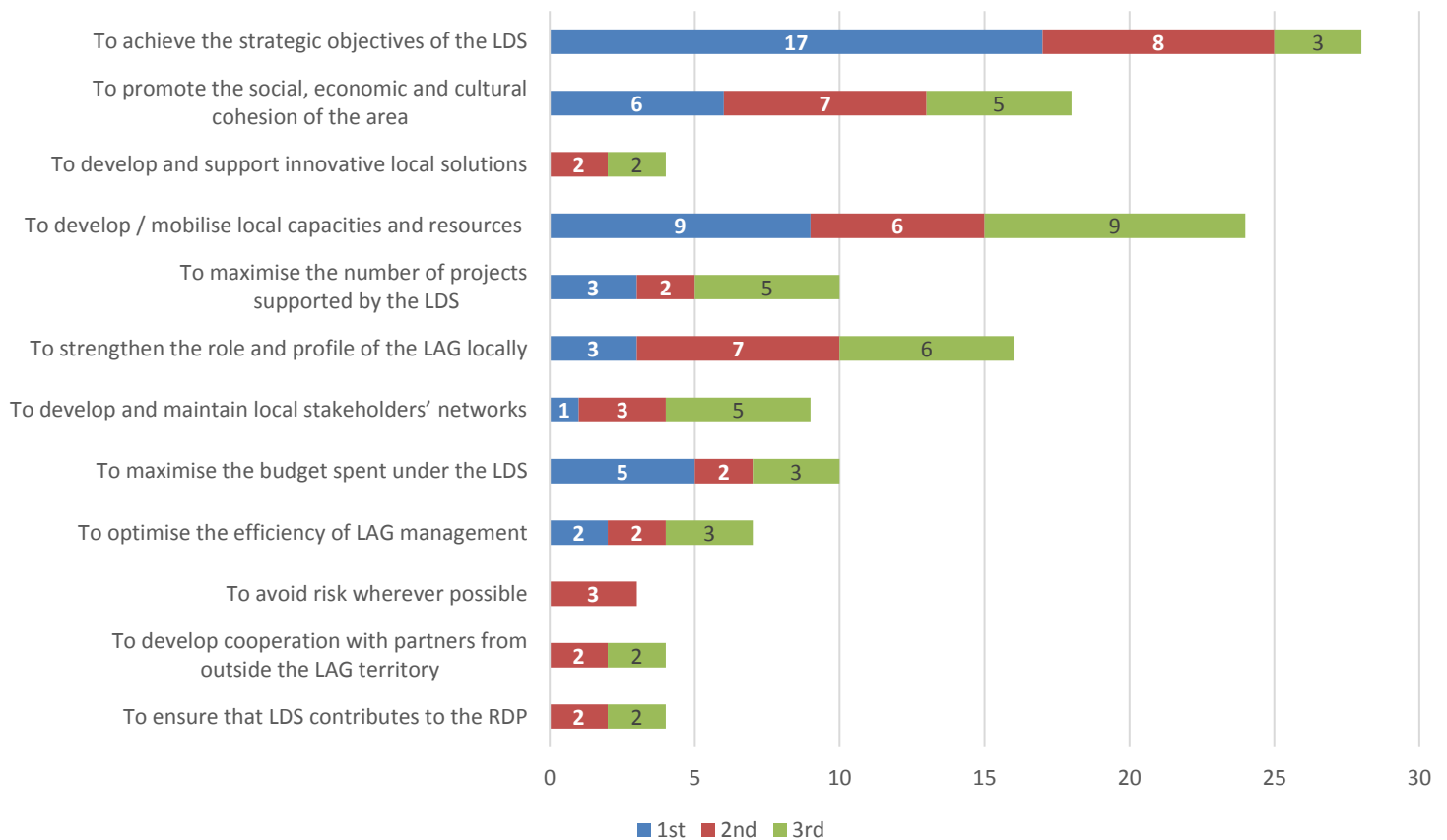
Question 21

How important are the following operational priorities to your LAG? Please select your top 3 most important options below in order of importance on a scale of 1 – 3 where 1 = most important.

- To achieve the strategic objectives of the local development strategy (LDS).
- To maximise the number of projects supported by the LDS.
- To maximise the budget spent under the LDS.
- To ensure that LDS contributes to the RDP.
- To optimise the efficiency of LAG management.
- To strengthen the role and profile of the LAG locally.
- To promote the social, economic and cultural cohesion of the area.
- To develop and support innovative local solutions.
- To avoid risk wherever possible.
- To develop and maintain local stakeholders' networks.
- To develop cooperation with partners from outside the LAG territory.
- To develop / mobilise local capacities and resources (human, funding, knowledge, etc.)

Total Number of Responses 46

Importance of Operational Priorities to LAGs

Priority	1st	2nd	3rd
To achieve the strategic objectives of the LDS	17	8	3
To promote the social, economic and cultural cohesion of the area	6	7	5
To develop and support innovative local solutions		2	2
To develop / mobilise local capacities and resources	9	6	9
To maximise the number of projects supported by the LDS	3	2	5
To strengthen the role and profile of the LAG locally	3	7	6
To develop and maintain local stakeholders' networks	1	3	5
To maximise the budget spent under the LDS	5	2	3
To optimise the efficiency of LAG management	2	2	3
To avoid risk wherever possible		3	
To develop cooperation with partners from outside the LAG territory		2	2
To ensure that LDS contributes to the RDP		2	2

- The ranking of operational priorities by the Czech LAGs is broadly similar to that for the EU survey in most topics.

- One marked difference is apparent in Czech respondents ranking the 'development and supporting of innovative local solutions' significantly lower than their European peers. It is ranked ninth by the Czech LAGs, but third at EU level.
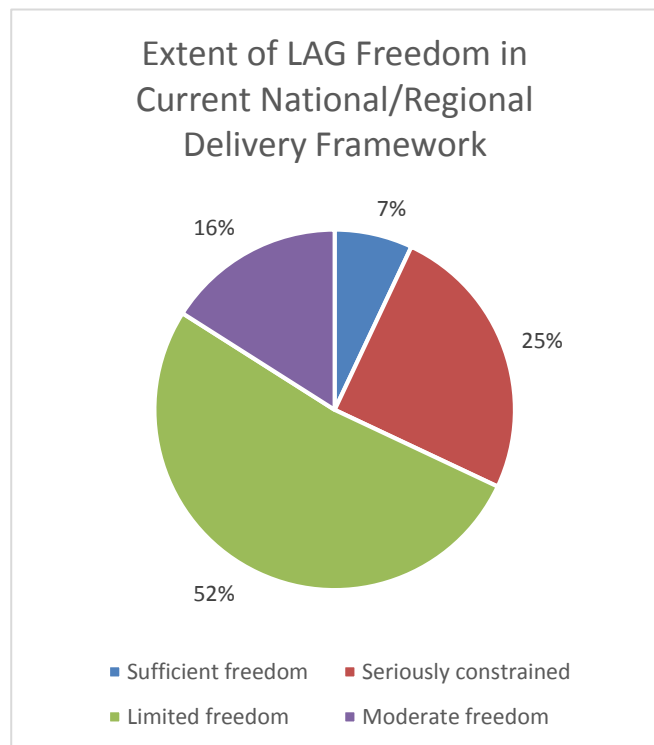
Question 22

To what extent does your national or regional LEADER delivery framework enable your LAG to pursue these operational priorities? Please select the option most appropriate to your LAG.

- The LAG has sufficient freedom to allow it to pursue its preferred priorities.
- The LAG has a moderate degree of freedom which allows it to partially address its priorities.
- The LAG has a limited degree of freedom which substantially compromises its freedom to address its priorities.
- The LAGs freedom to address its operational priorities is seriously constrained

Total Number of Responses 44

- There is a marked difference between the Czech LAGs' response to this question and the overall survey. 77% of Czech respondents rated their level of freedom here as 'limited' or 'seriously constrained' as opposed to 38% of the EU sample.

- In contrast, a higher proportion of the overall EU sample thought that they enjoy 'moderate freedom' (45%) than Czech LAGs (16%).
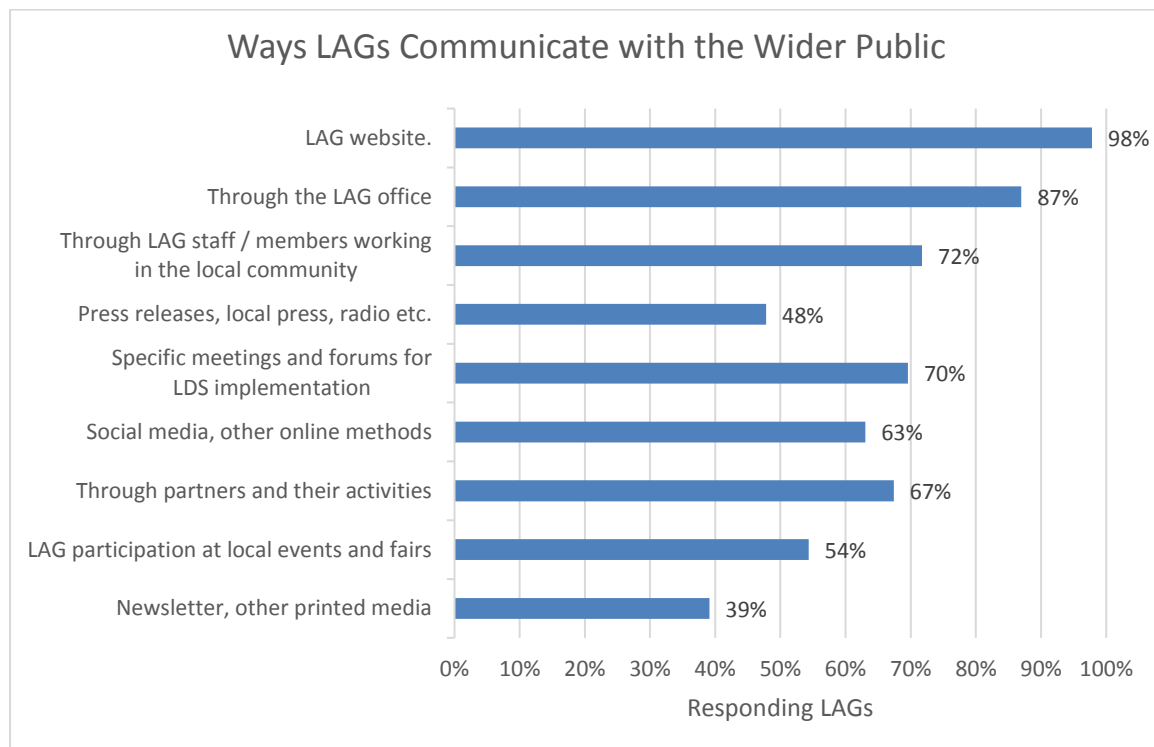

Extent of LAG Freedom in Current National/Regional Delivery Framework

Question 23

What is the main way your LAG communicates with the wider public in your LAG Territory (including potential beneficiaries)? Please select those methods which your LAG uses.

- LAG website.
- Specific meetings and forums for LDS implementation.
- Through the LAG office.
- Through LAG staff / members working in the local community.
- LAG participation at local events and fairs.
- Press releases, local press, radio etc.
- Newsletter, other printed media.
- Social media, other online methods.
- Through partners and their activities.

Total Number of Responses 46

Ways LAGs Communicate with the Wider Public

|	Responding LAGs
LAG website.	98%
Through the LAG office	87%
Through LAG staff / members working in the local community	72%
Press releases, local press, radio etc.	48%
Specific meetings and forums for LDS implementation	70%
Social media, other online methods	63%
Through partners and their activities	67%
LAG participation at local events and fairs	54%
Newsletter, other printed media	39%

- Czech LAGs appear to make less use of press releases, local press etc. than the overall EU sample (48% vs 65%).

- They seem to make somewhat more use of communicating through partners and their activities than their European peers (67% vs 54%).

Question 24

What are the main ways in which you receive information from the Managing Authority? Please select those methods which are most used

- Managing Authority website.
- Regular meetings and forums organised for LAGs.
- Through National Rural Network.
- Social media.
- Printed publications and guidance.
- Email.
- Through intermediary e.g. regional office or network.

Total Number of Responses 46

Ways LAGs Receive Information from MA/PA

| Category	Value
Email	87%
Regular meetings and forums organised for LAGs	61%
Managing Authority website	78%
Through National Rural Network	50%
Through intermediary e.g. regional office or network	30%
Printed publications and guidance	9%
Social media	7%
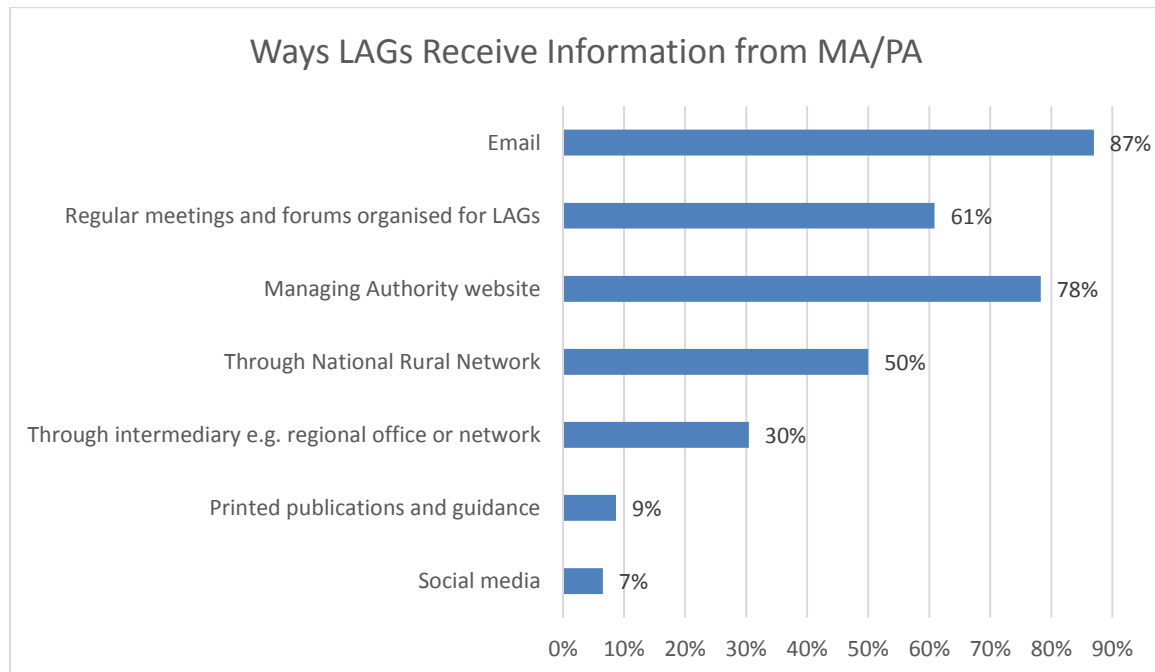
- In the Czech Republic it appears that much greater use is made of the Managing Authority website (78% vs 34%). There is also greater involvement of the NRN in communicating information than in the wider sample (50% vs 31%).

- The use of printed publications and guidance is lower amongst responding Czech LAGs than in the EU sample (9% vs 22%).

Question 25

Which of the following priority themes relate most closely to your Local Development Strategy objectives? Please select (up to) the three most relevant ones from the options provided.

- Knowledge transfer, education, capacity building.
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Agriculture and farming, supply chains, local food.
- Local economy (non-agriculture), job creation.
- Culture, traditions, built environment.
- Natural environment and resources, landscape.
- Social inclusion, equality of opportunity, cohesion, services.
- Local governance and community development.
- Broadband, internet, ICT.

Total Number of Responses 46
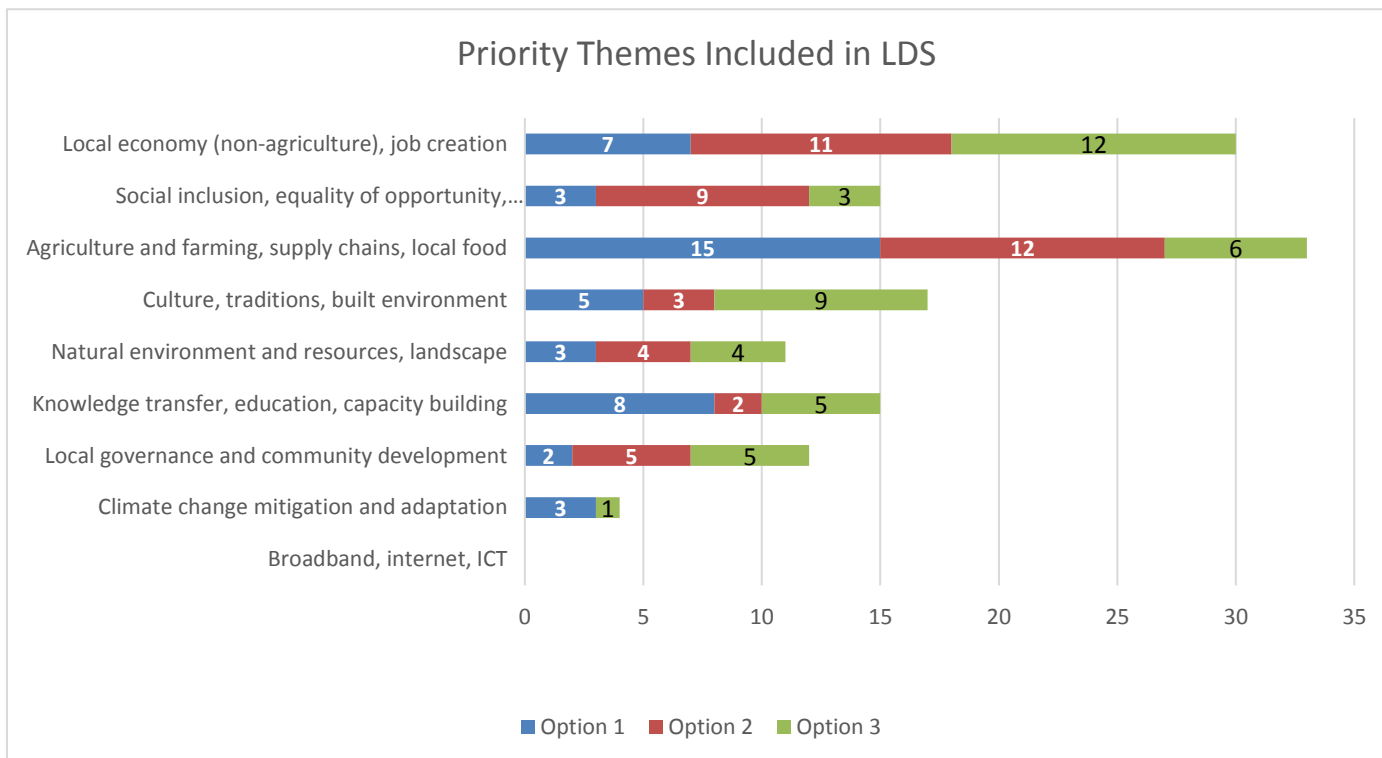
- In comparison to the EU sample, relatively more Czech LAGs reported that their LDS relates closely to 'agriculture and farming, supplies, and local food'. This theme received the highest ranking in the Czech Republic.

- 'Social inclusion, equality of opportunity, and social cohesion' was ranked markedly lower by the Czech respondents in comparison to the EU sample whilst knowledge transfer, education, capacity building ranked somewhat higher.
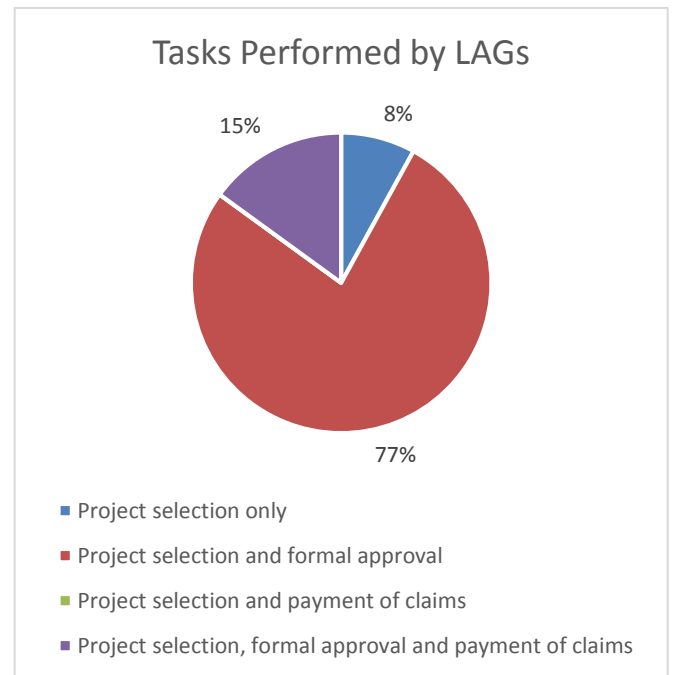
Question 26

What tasks does your LAG perform in relation to LEADER projects as part of your LDS implementation?
Please select one of the options.

- Project selection only – 8%
- Project selection and formal approval – 77%
- Project selection and payment of claims – 0%
- Project selection, formal approval and payment of claims – 15%

Total Number of Responses 47

- A significantly larger percentage of Czech LAGs (77%) reported that they 'select and formally approve projects'. At EU level only 31% of LAGs perform this task.

- In contrast, much fewer Czech respondents stated that they were in charge of project selection only (8%) in comparison to 48% LAGs across Europe.

Tasks Performed by LAGs

- Project selection only
- Project selection and formal approval
- Project selection and payment of claims
- Project selection, formal approval and payment of claims
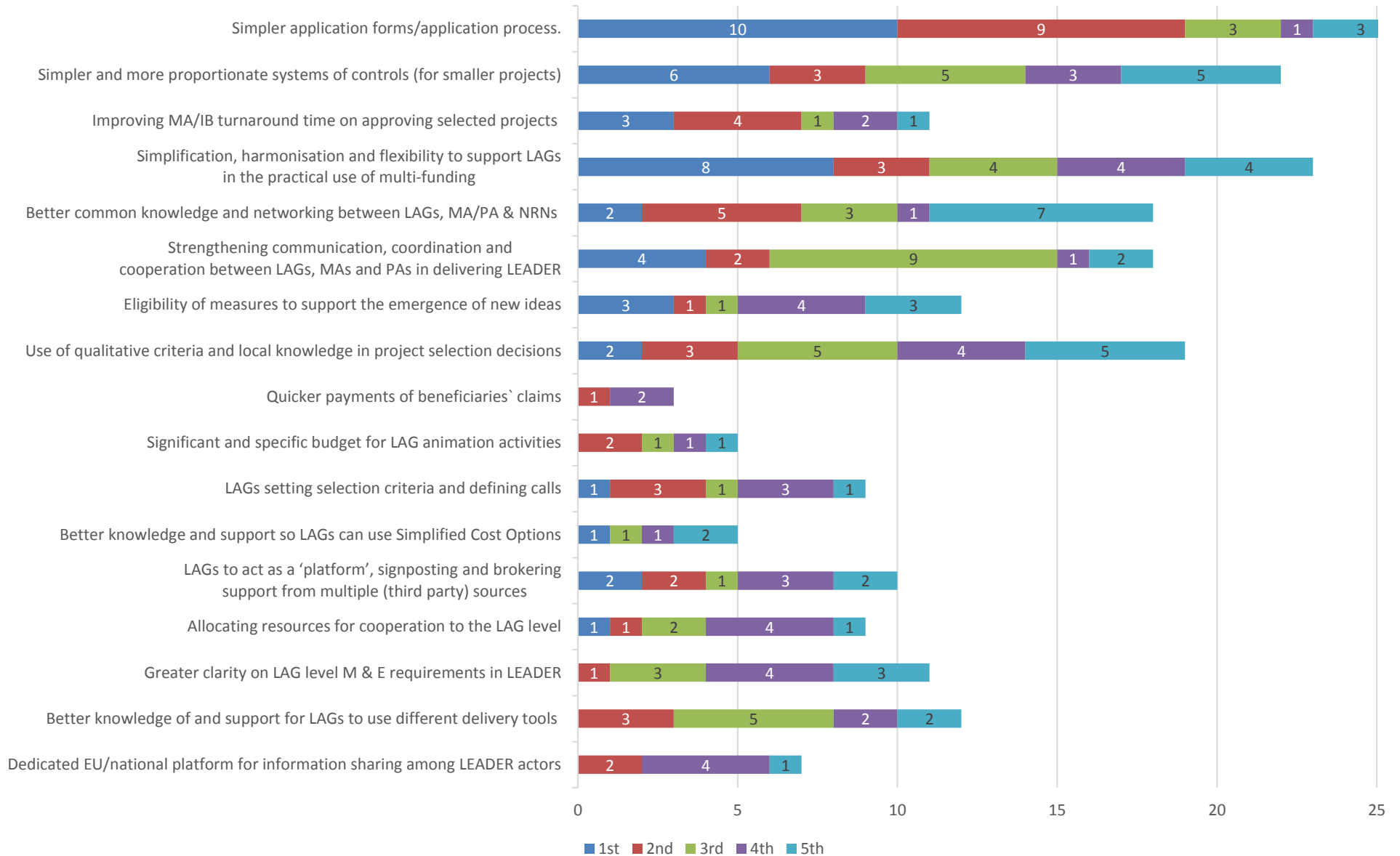
LEADER Improvements

What is most important to address in helping LAGs to be effective in implementing LEADER now? Please select and rank your top five priorities from the following items in order of their importance in (where 1= highest importance and 5 = 5th most important)

- Better common knowledge and support through networking of LAGs, Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies and National Rural Networks and exchanges on transferable experience and practices
- The eligibility of measures to support the emergence of new ideas, e.g. the use of feasibility studies, LAG led projects, pilot projects, preparatory work etc. should be ensured from the EU level down.
- Setting aside a significant and specific budget for LAG animation activities.
- Allocating resources for cooperation to the LAG level.
- Ensuring better common knowledge of and support for LAGs to take advantage of using simplified cost options.
- LAGs setting selection criteria and defining calls
- LAGs using qualitative criteria and local knowledge to inform project selection decisions.
- Ensuring better common knowledge of and support for LAGs to take advantage of using different delivery tools e.g. 'Umbrella projects'.
- Improving MA or intermediary body turnaround time on approving selected projects.
- Improving timeliness of payments of beneficiaries` claims.
- Simpler and more proportionate systems of controls (for smaller projects?).
- Simplification, harmonisation and flexibility to support LAGs in the practical use of multi-funding.
- Greater clarity on LAG level monitoring and evaluation (M&E) requirements in LEADER.
- Strengthening communication, coordination and cooperation between LAGs, Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies in delivering LEADER.
- A dedicated EU/national platform for information sharing among LEADER actors.
- Simpler application forms/application process.
- Allowing LAGs to act as a 'platform', signposting and brokering support from multiple (third party) sources to further LDS objectives.

Total Number of Responses 46

- Generally, the responses of the Czech LAGs were in line with the EU sample, while more emphasis was given to improving the 'use of qualitative criteria in project selection' and the 'simplification, harmonisation and flexibility to support LAGs in implementation of multi-funding'.

- Less priority was given by the Czech respondents to any improvements concerning the 'timeliness of payments', 'turnaround times', 'simplified cost options', and 'significant and specific budgets for animation activities'.

Most Important Changes to Improve Implementation Now

Change	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Simpler application forms/application process.	10	9	3	1	3
Simpler and more proportionate systems of controls (for smaller projects)	6	3	5	3	5
Improving MA/IB turnaround time on approving selected projects	3	4	1	2	1
Simplification, harmonisation and flexibility to support LAGs in the practical use of multi-funding	8	3	4	4	4
Better common knowledge and networking between LAGs, MA/PA & NRNs	2	5	3	1	7
Strengthening communication, coordination and cooperation between LAGs, MAs and PAs in delivering LEADER	4	2	9	1	2
Eligibility of measures to support the emergence of new ideas	3	1	1	4	3
Use of qualitative criteria and local knowledge in project selection decisions	2	3	5	4	5
Quicker payments of beneficiaries` claims		1		2	
Significant and specific budget for LAG animation activities		2	1	1	1
LAGs setting selection criteria and defining calls	1	3	1	3	1
Better knowledge and support so LAGs can use Simplified Cost Options	1		1	1	2
LAGs to act as a 'platform', signposting and brokering support from multiple (third party) sources	2	2	1	3	2
Allocating resources for cooperation to the LAG level	1	1	2	4	1
Greater clarity on LAG level M & E requirements in LEADER	1		3	4	3
Better knowledge of and support for LAGs to use different delivery tools		3	5	2	2
Dedicated EU/national platform for information sharing among LEADER actors		2		4	1

Question 28:

Some LAGs desire greater independence in their operations with more power and responsibility e.g. in project selection and approvals, project management, use of funds, managing risk etc. Which one of these statements best reflects your LAG`s position?

- We are happy with the existing levels of responsibility, independence and accountability
- We prefer less independence with a lower level of direct LAG responsibility and financial accountability
- We prefer the existing level of independence with a lower level of direct LAG responsibility and financial accountability
- We prefer a much higher degree of independence and would be happy with a significantly higher degree of direct responsibility and financial accountability
- We prefer a moderate increase in independence with a moderate increase in direct responsibility and financial accountability
- Any increase in independence should not be linked to increased LAG responsibilities and accountability

Total number of responses – 45
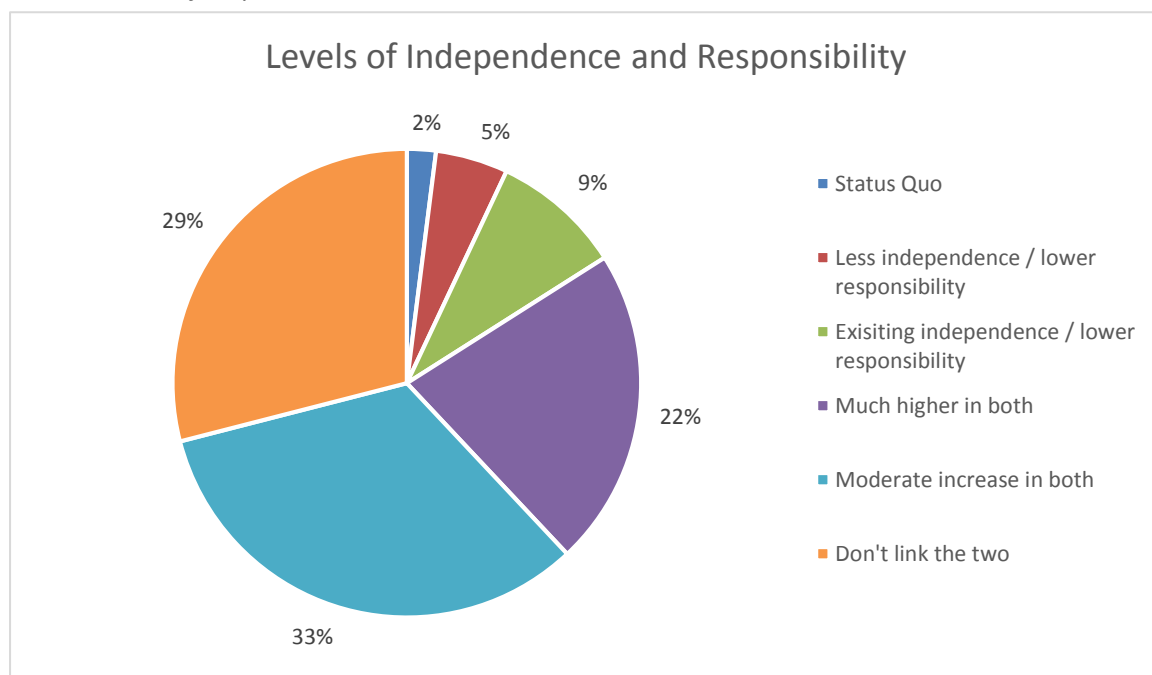
- A much smaller proportion of Czech LAGs (2%) are in favour of the status quo than the overall EU LAG sample (20%), while there is slightly more interest expressed by Czech respondents in increasing both aspects 'moderately' or to a 'much higher' degree.
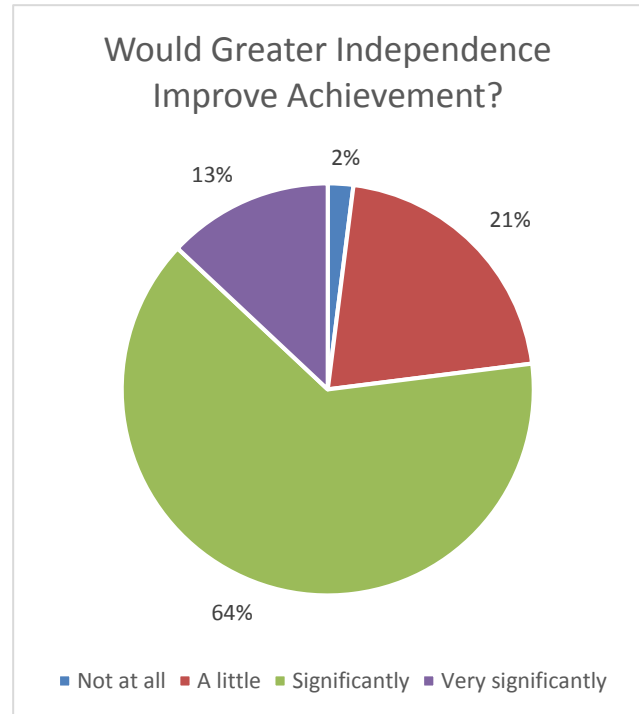
Question 29

To what extent would greater independence, power and responsibility for your LAGs improve what you are able to achieve? Please select one option.

- Not at all
- A little
- Significantly
- Very significantly

Total Number of Responses 47

- Responding Czech LAGs thought greater independence would have much more effect on improving achievement than the overall EU sample, 77% ranked the effects as 'significantly' or 'very significantly' as opposed to 54% of the other European LAGs.

Would Greater Independence Improve Achievement?

2%
13%
21%
64%

■ Not at all ■ A little ■ Significantly ■ Very significantly

Question 30

If it was possible to reduce LAG administration through the provision of a centralised support service (e.g. shared and managed by multiple LAGs) to what extent would that improve your LAGs level of achievement?

- Not at all
- A little %
- Significantly
- Very significantly

Total Number of Responses 47

Would a Centralised Support Service Improve LAGs' Level of Achievement?
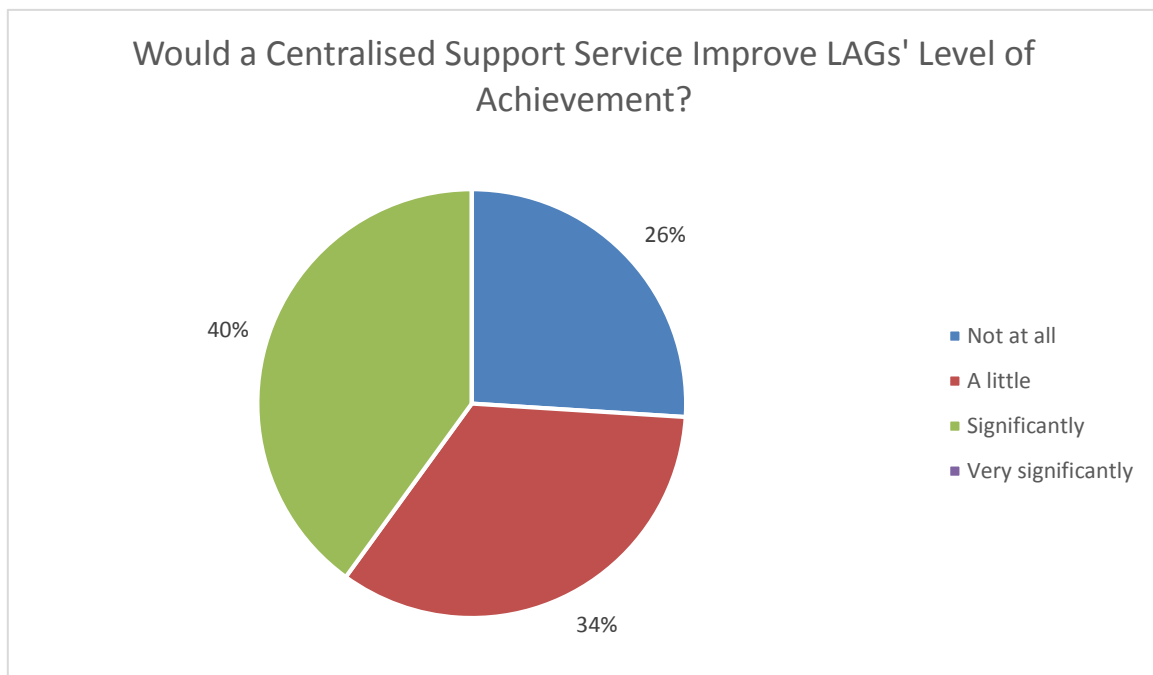
- A larger proportion (40%) of the Czech respondents considered that a centralised support service would lead to 'significant' improvements, compared to 28% at EU level.

- A smaller proportion of Czech respondents thought that a centralised support service would 'not improve LAG's performance at all' (26% vs 36%).

Question 31

*To what extent does support from national and regional Rural Development Programme authorities
(e.g. Managing Authority, Paying Agency) meet LAG needs and enhance LEADER implementation?
Please, use the following scale to rank the provision against the specified needs:*

1= no gaps in support – no support needed,
2 = slight gaps – some support needed,
3 = considerable gaps – lot of support needed.

- Improving the understanding of RDP measures and their delivery.
- Communicating the RDP and LEADER achievements.
- Understanding LEADER linkages to other RDP measures.
- Capacity building for LAGs.
- Animation and networking.
- Cooperation.
- Timely access to EU level information.
- Coordination and cooperation between LEADER actors at national and EU level.
- Communicating and explaining relevant changes e.g. in regulations.
- Ensuring a better and mutual understanding of audit expectations.

Total Number of Responses 46

Gaps and Support Needs at National/Regional RDP Level

Category	No gaps/No Support	Slight Gaps/Some Support	Considerable gaps/Lot of Support
Animation and networking	9	31	5
Improving the understanding of RDP measures and their delivery	10	29	7
Communicating the RDP and LEADER achievements	9	30	5
Capacity building for LAGs	10	27	9
Understanding LEADER linkages to other RDP measures	8	26	11
Cooperation	8	24	14
Timely access to EU level information	11	21	14
Coordination and cooperation between LEADER actors at national and EU level	10	21	15
Communicating and explaining relevant changes e.g. in regulations	5	23	18
Ensuring a better and mutual understanding of audit expectations	5	27	14

■No gaps/No Support ■Slight Gaps/Some Support ■Considerable gaps/Lot of Support

- The gaps and support needs identified by Czech LAGs were similar to those of the overall EU sample, although across the range of topics 'slight gaps / some support' have been identified more frequently than at EU level.

Question 32

To what extent does support from national and regional Rural Networks meet LAG needs and enhance LEADER implementation? Please, use the following scale to rank the provision against the specified needs:

1= no gaps in support – no support needed,
2 = slight gaps – some support needed,
3 = considerable gaps – lot of support needed.

- Improving the understanding of RDP measures and their delivery.
- Self-assessment and evaluation.
- Communicating the RDP and LEADER achievements.
- Understanding LEADER linkages to other RDP measures, e.g. EIP Operational Groups.
- Capacity building for LAGs.
- Animation and networking.
- Cooperation.
- Timely access to EU level information.
- Supporting costs of LAG participation in the work of the ENRD e.g. events
- Coordination and cooperation between LEADER actors at national and EU level.
- Ensuring a better and mutual understanding of audit expectations.

Total Number of Responses 46

Gaps and Support Needs at National/Regional Networks Level
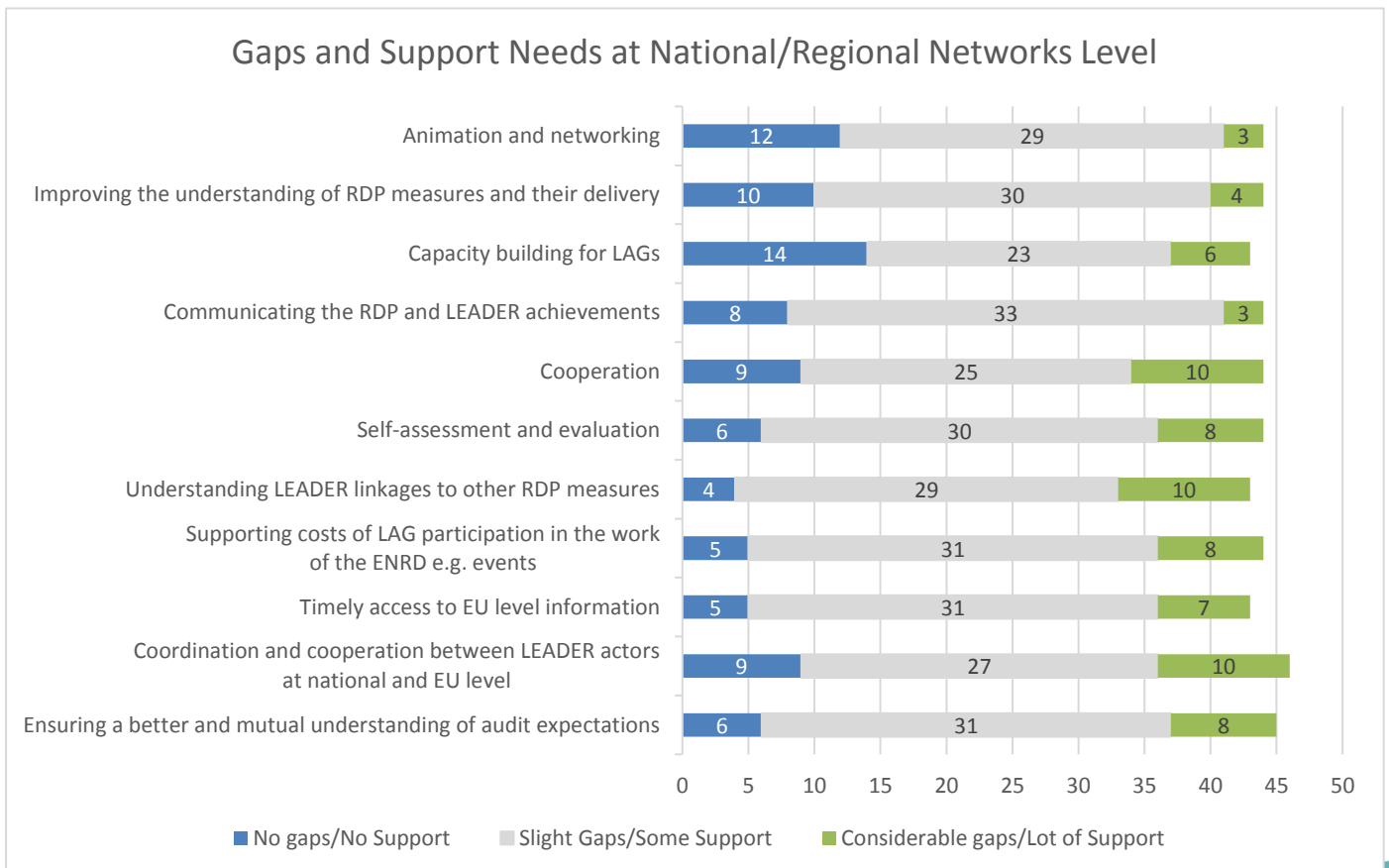
- Proportionately more Czech LAGs identified 'slight gaps and some support needs' at the national and regional networks level than the EU sample.

- A slightly greater proportion of Czech respondents indicated that there were 'no gaps / no support needs' regarding 'capacity building for LAGs' and 'coordination and cooperation between LEADER actors in the delivery chain'.
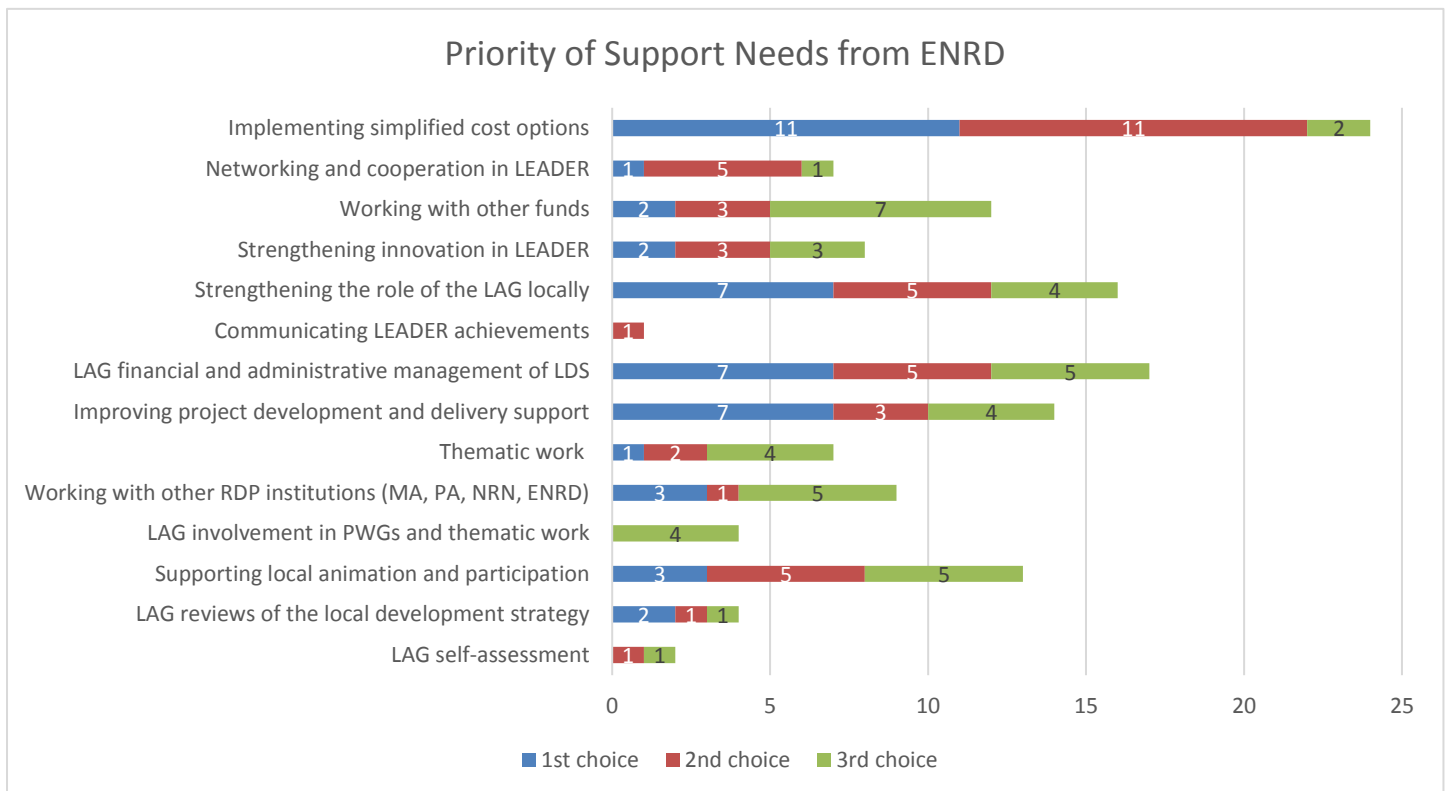
Question 33

Which of the following areas of your LAG's activity are the priorities which the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) should work on to help your LAG most?

Please rank the three most important options below on a scale of 1 – 3 where 1 = most important.

- LAG reviews of the local development strategy.
- LAG financial and administrative management of local development strategy implementation.
- Improving project development and delivery support.
- Implementing simplified cost options.
- Networking and cooperation in LEADER.
- Communicating LEADER achievements.
- Strengthening innovation in LEADER.
- Strengthening the role of the LAG locally.
- Supporting local animation and participation.
- Thematic work (e.g. Greening the local economy, social innovation, ICT & broadband, smart villages, etc.).
- Working with other RDP institutions (MA, PA, NRN, ENRD).
- LAG self-assessment.
- Working with other funds.
- LAG involvement in practitioner-working groups and thematic work.

Total Number of Responses 46

- Although the highest priority of support needs (implementing simplified cost options) is in line with the other EU LAGs, there were significant differences between Czech responses to this question and the wider EU sample.

- Czech LAGs have ranked a number of support needs much lower than their European peers. This included 'communicating LEADER achievements', 'networking and cooperation in LEADER', and 'strengthening innovation in LEADER'.

- Czech LAGs ranked support needs for a number of topics higher than the EU sample, such as 'supporting local animation and participation', 'LAG financial and administrative management of LDS', and 'improving project development and delivery support'.

Question 34

What could help you get more involved in the work of the ENRD? You may select up to three of the options below. Please rank the three most important options below on a scale of 1 – 3 where 1 = most important.

- More flexible administrative rules relating to travel, participations in conferences etc.
- A higher LAG budget
- More available time
- More LAG staff
- More language versions of ENRD documents
- More information from the NRN on ENRD activities
- NRN support
- Less costly methods of participation (e.g. Online meetings)
- Access to support for costs of participation in events
- Other, please describe

Total Number of Responses 46
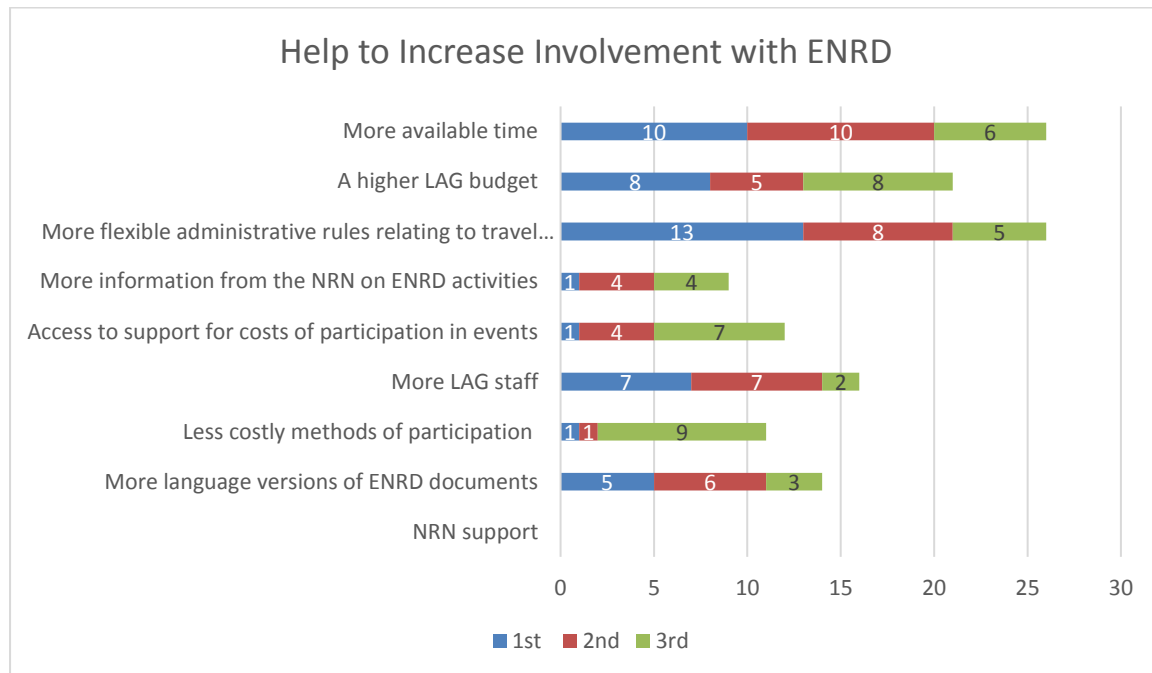
- Czech LAGs placed a higher priority on 'more language versions of ENRD documents' to help increase their involvement with ENRD. At the same time, they allocated a lower priority to issues such as 'more information from the NRN on ENRD activities' and 'NRN support' than the overall EU sample.

Question 35

How important do you think self-assessment (internal review) of your own Local Development Strategy is to improving your LAG`s operation?

- Not very important
- Moderate importance
- Important
- Essential

Total Number of Responses 45

Importance of Self-assessment of LDS to Improve LAGs' Operation
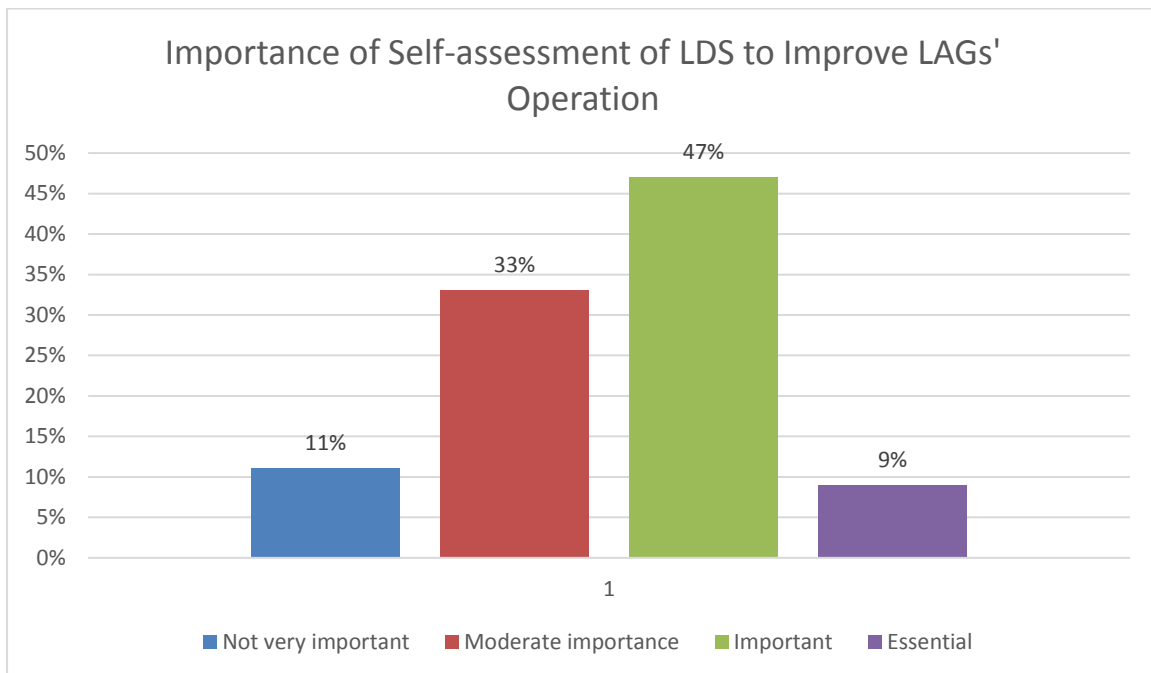
- Although there was a slightly greater proportion of Czech LAGs that considered self-assessment as an important operation (47% vs 43%), there were far less than at EU level that rated this as an 'essential' task (9% vs 28%). Consequently, a greater proportion of Czech respondents considered self-assessment as 'moderately' or 'not very important' (44% vs 30%).

Question 36

When are you planning to launch your first self-assessment?

- Already done
- By end 2017
- First half of 2018
- Second half of 2018
- In 2019 or later
- It is an ongoing process
- Not applicable

Total Number of Responses 46

Time Line - Launch of First Self-assessment
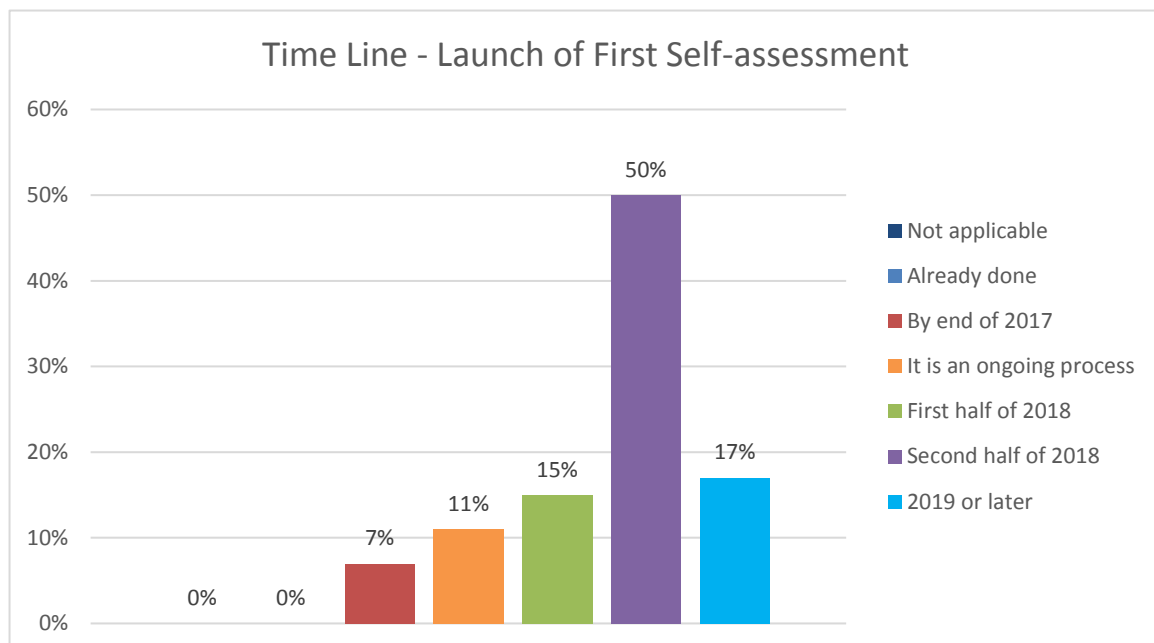
- For most Czech respondents (67%), the launch of the first self-assessment still had to be undertaken in the second half of 2018 or later in 2019 (vs 35% of the EU sample).

Question 37

Are you willing to participate in further LEADER work with the ENRD (e.g. a focus group, practitioner-working group, other forms)?

- Yes – 57%
- No – 43%

Total Number of Responses 46

- The Czech level of positive responses here was well below that for the wider sample of 81%.