LEADER LAG Survey 2017

Working Paper

Findings at Member State level

Member State: United Kingdom

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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

- United Kingdom (UK)
- 50 LAGs responded, representing 7% of total LAG responses
- 39% of UK LAGs responded to the survey

Total Number of Responses 50

Question 2

Please select your Rural Development Programme (RDP)

- The UK has 4 regional RDPs.
- Responses were received from all 4 regional RDPs.

Total Number of Responses 50

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 50

- The responses from the UK are broadly similar to the overall EU sample, a higher percentage of LAG Board Members responded than the EU sample (12% vs 2%).

Respondents' Position

- LAG Manager 66%
- Other LAG Staff 18%
- LAG Chair/ President 4%
- LAG Board Member 12%
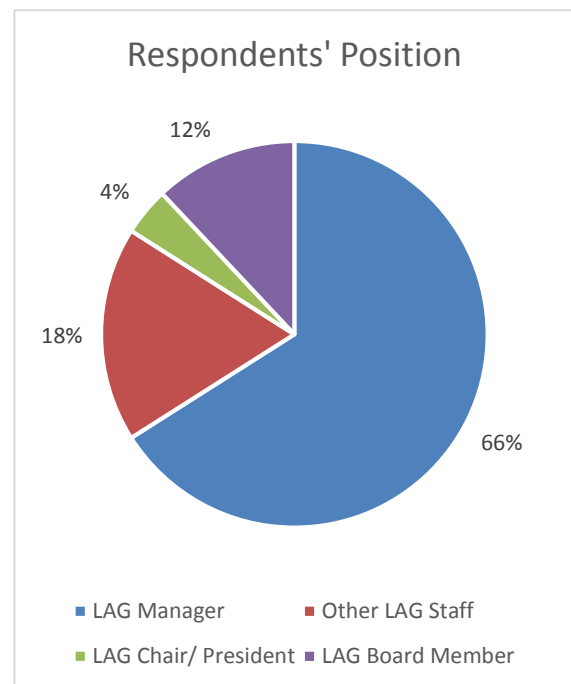
Question 7

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)
- 2007-2013 Programming Period
- LEADER+
- LEADER II
- LEADER I

Total Number of Responses 50

- In the UK sample there was representation from all ages of LAGs. There were slightly more responses from new 2014-2020 and 2007-2013 LAGs than the EU sample (70% vs 56%) and lower levels from LEADER I and LEADER II.

First Period LAG became Operational

2% 10% 18% 32% 38%

Legend: New LAG 2014-2020 · 2007-2013 LAG · LEADER+ · LEADER II · LEADER I
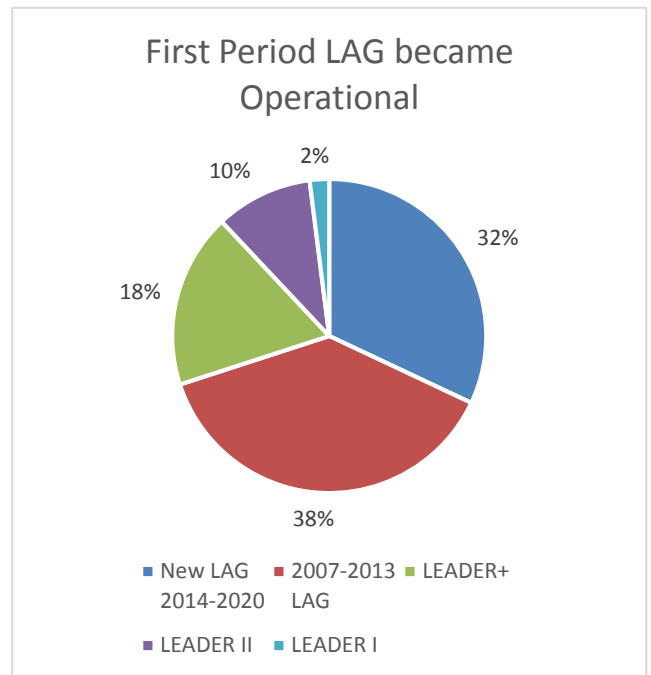
Question 8

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 50

Time LAGs were Formally Selected in 2014-2020 Programme Period

Period	Percentage
2014	36%
First half of 2015	34%
Second half of 2015	18%
First half of 2016	6%
Second half of 2016	4%
First half of 2017	2%
Second half of 2017	
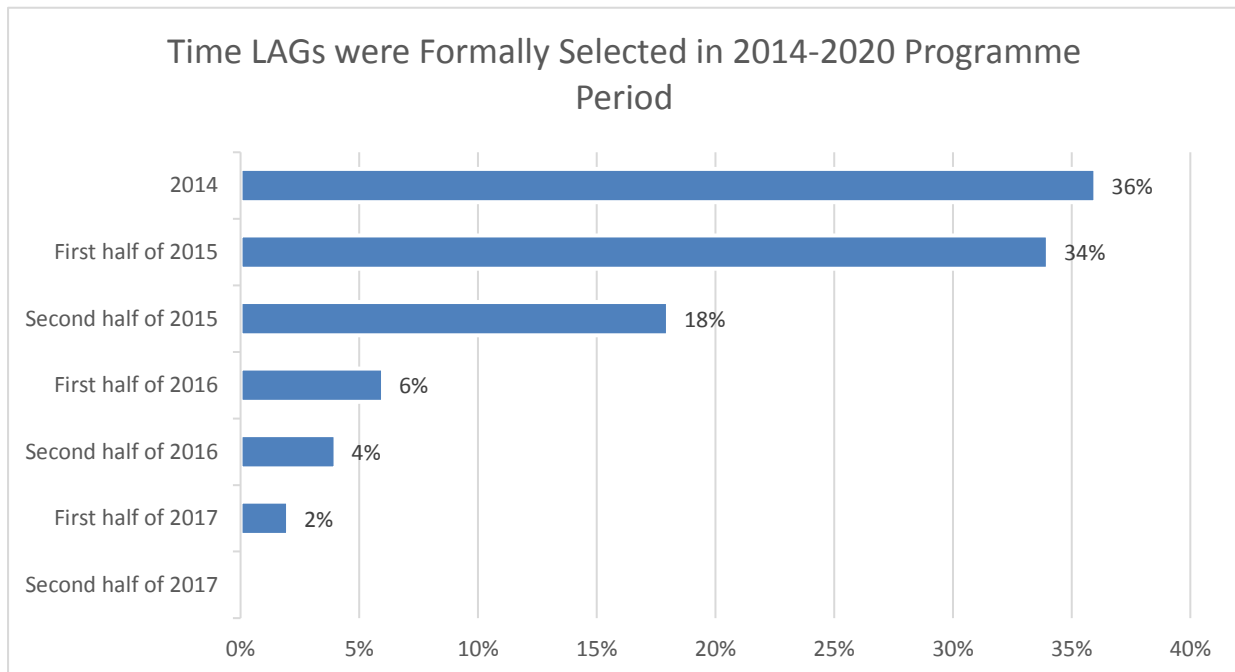
- By the end of 2015, the vast majority (90%) of responding UK LAGs were formally selected, in comparison to 59% of the EU sample.

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 50

Timing of LAGs Launch of First Call for Projects

Category	% of LAGs
First half of 2015	12%
Second half of 2015	40%
First half of 2016	36%
Second half of 2016	6%
First half of 2017	4%
Second half of 2017	2%
2018	

% of LAGs
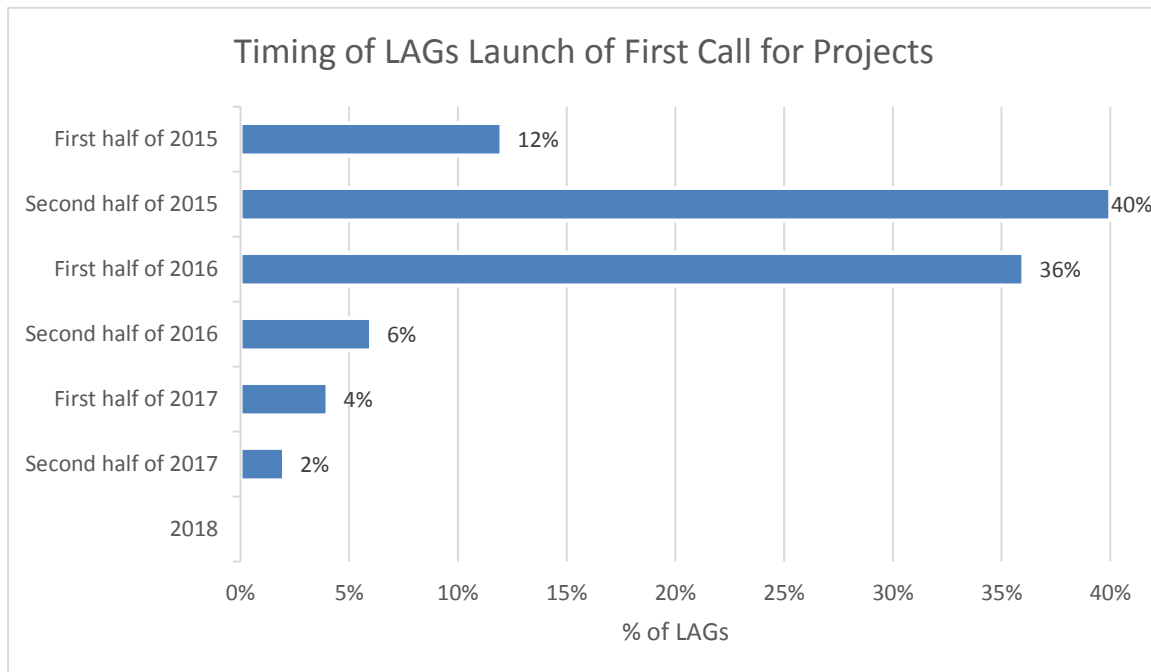
- 52% of responding LAGs in the UK, had their first call of projects in 2015 in comparison to 32% of the EU sample.

- 94% of UK LAGs who responded had launched their first call by the end of 2016 by comparison with 67% of the overall EU sample.

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)

It should be noted that the percentages sum up to more than 100% reflecting LAGs use of multiple funds.

Total Number of Responses 49
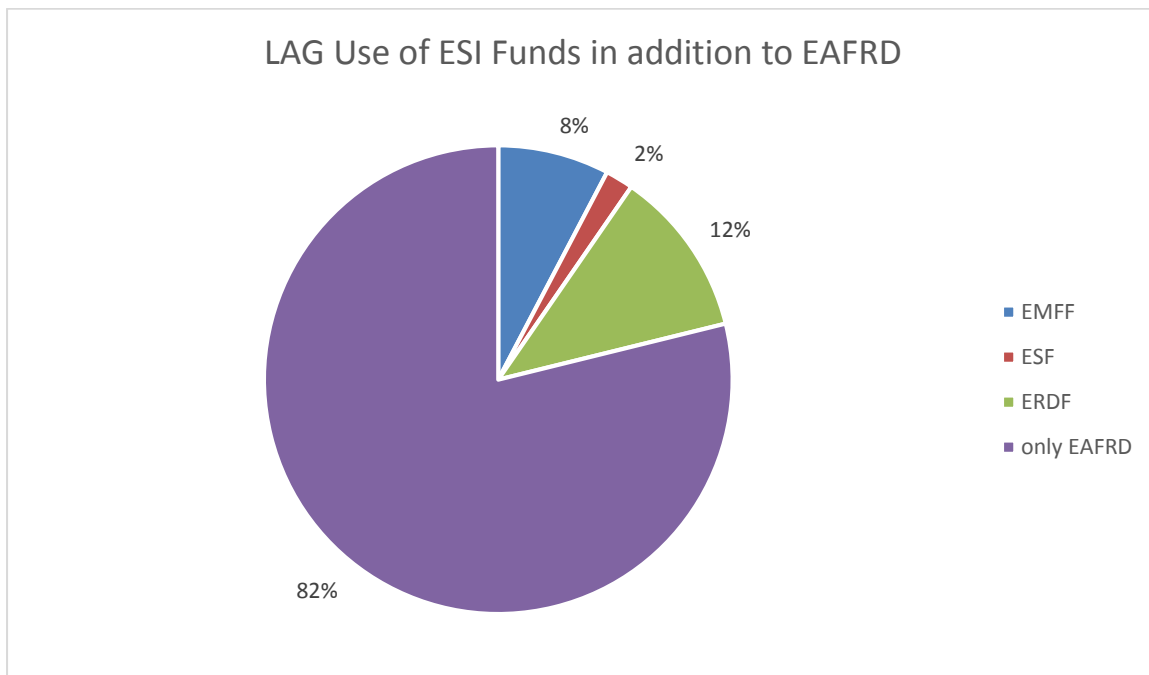
- A considerably higher proportion of UK LAGs who responded reported using 'only EAFRD' compared to the EU sample (82% vs 67%). A slightly higher percentage of responding LAGs in the UK used EMFF 12%, than the 9% in the EU sample, ERDF and ESF use was lower in the UK than wider EU.

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 49

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
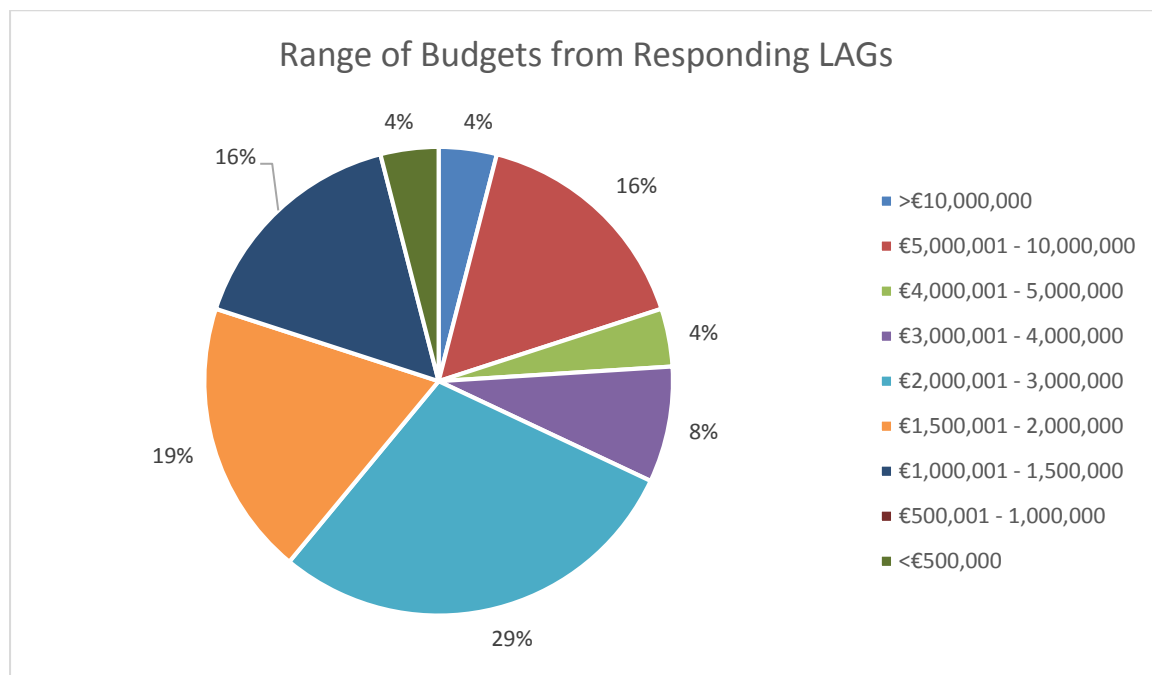
- There was a smaller proportion of responding LAGs from the UK with budgets in the €3-4m range (8%) compared to the EU sample (22%) and slightly more responding UK LAGs in the €1.5-3m bracket (48% vs 34%).

- Only 32% of UK LAGs had a budget of over €3m vs 51% in the EU sample.

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 49

- A higher percentage of responding UK LAGs allocated 17-20% of their LAG budget (55%) than the EU sample (33%).

- There was also a smaller proportion of responding UK LAGs (19%) who allocated 21-25% than the EU sample (31%).

% of LAG Budget Spent on Animation & Running Costs

6%
6%
14%
19%
55%

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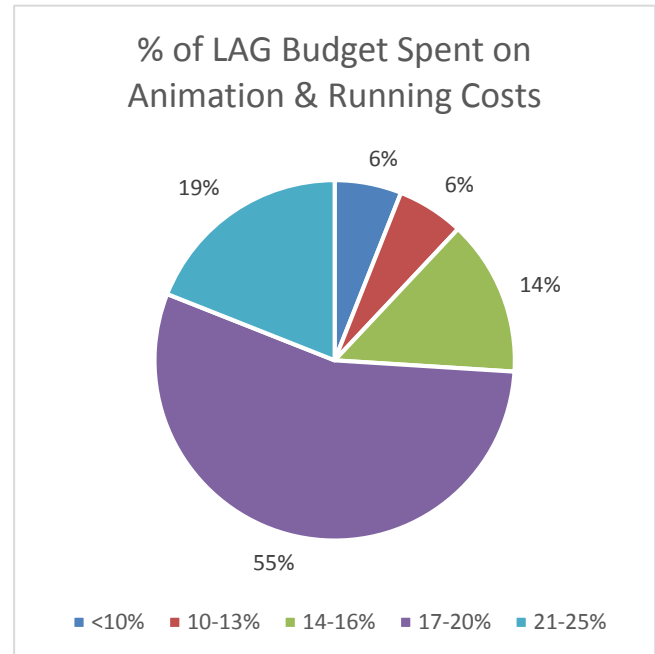
LEADER Principles

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 44

Relative Importance of LEADER Principles
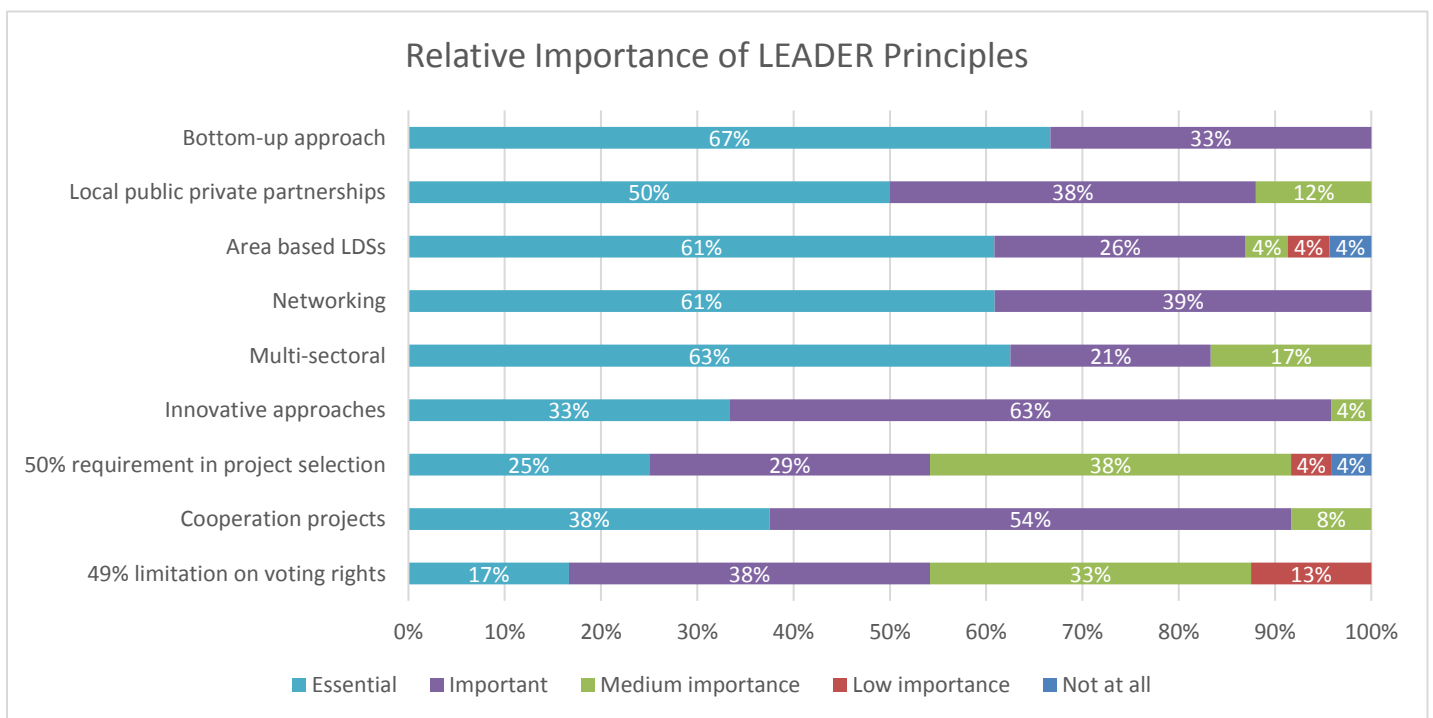
- The Bottom-up approach and Networking are seen as essential or important by 100% of LAGs in the UK, compared to 90% and 82% respectively in the EU sample.

- Innovative approaches (96%) and cooperation projects (92%) and are seen to have higher importance in the UK than in the EU sample where they rate 68% and 61% respectively.

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 44
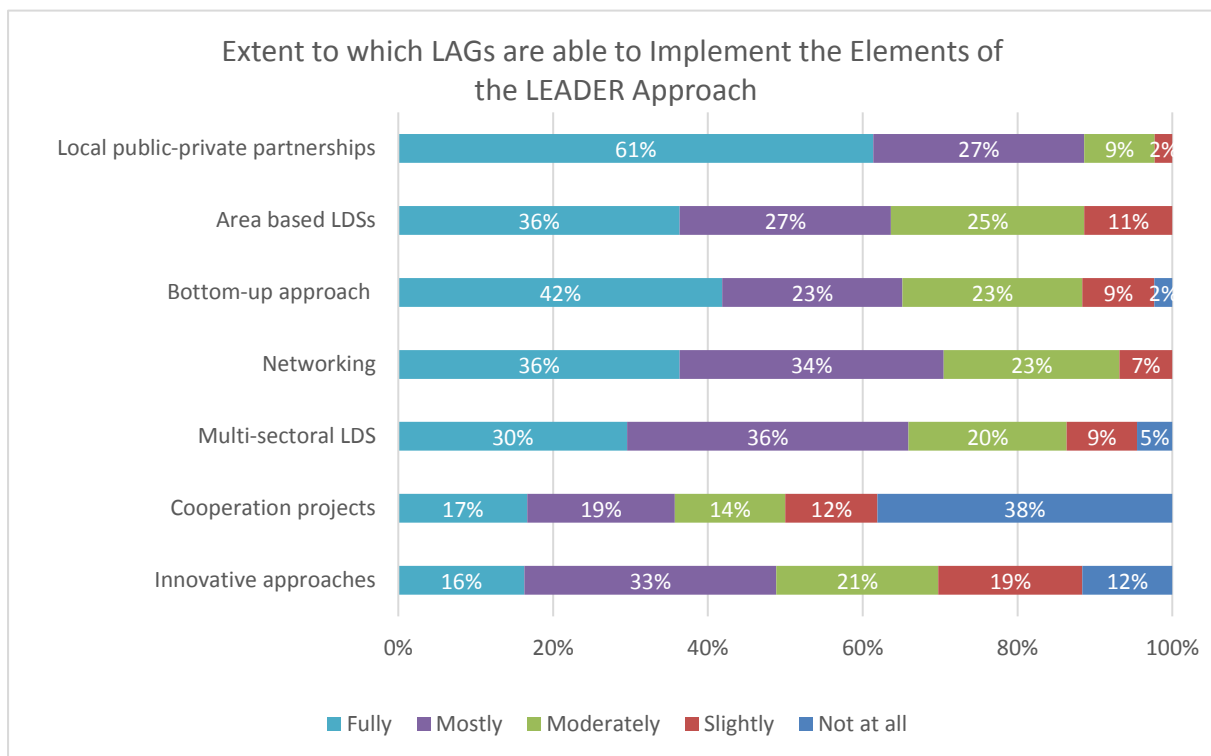

- Overall UK LAGs responded in a similar way to the EU sample, with the exception of cooperation projects, where 38% of responding UK LAGs stated that they could not implement cooperation projects at all in comparison with 14% in the EU sample.

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 44

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	86%	9%	5%
LAG is able to use qualitative criteria & local knowledge for project selection decisions	77%	18%	5%
Admin & reporting requirements limit LAG's capacity for animation & local development	70%	20%	9%
LAG has overall control of setting selection criteria & defining calls for projects	53%	44%	2%
LAG funding for the animation of local stakeholders & networking is sufficient.	45%	48%	7%
Implementation procedures are able to meet local development needs in a flexible, innovative way	48%	50%	2%
Eligibility conditions for LEADER beneficiaries are appropriate & proportionate to support sought	32%	57%	11%
Project application procedure is accessible & encourage local stakeholders to participate in LEADER	30%	66%	5%
Decision-making power of LAGs is not overly limited by RDP level procedures & regulations	31%	64%	5%
Project holders` ability to implement LEADER projects is not overly constrained by bureaucracy & admin burden	14%	80%	7%

- The replies from the responding UK LAGs are very similar to the EU sample. The UK LAGs record slightly lower agreement for LAG control of selection criteria and project calls and funding for animation of stakeholders.
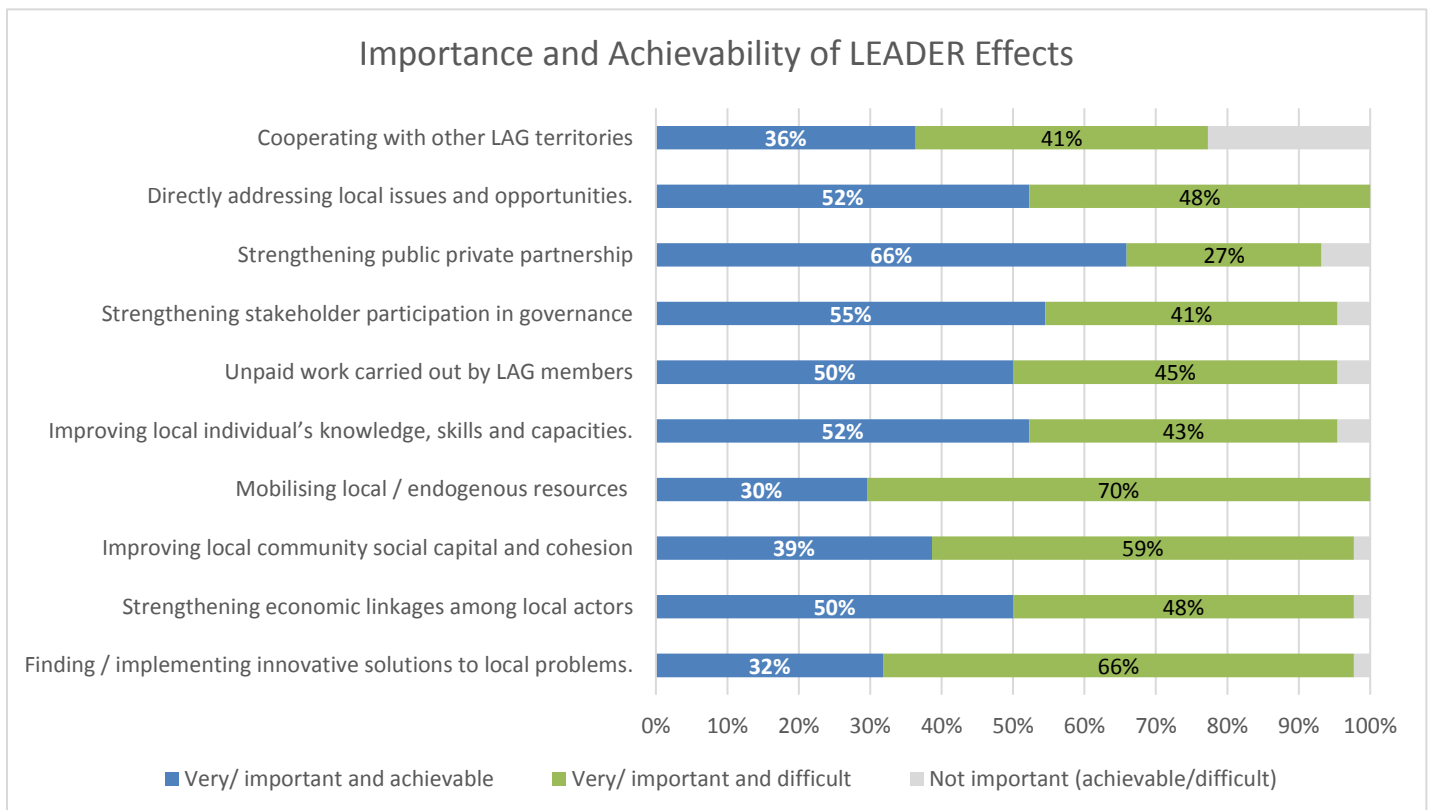
Question 16

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 44

Importance and Achievability of LEADER Effects

Effect	Very/ important and achievable	Very/ important and difficult
Cooperating with other LAG territories	36%	41%
Directly addressing local issues and opportunities.	52%	48%
Strengthening public private partnership	66%	27%
Strengthening stakeholder participation in governance	55%	41%
Unpaid work carried out by LAG members	50%	45%
Improving local individual's knowledge, skills and capacities.	52%	43%
Mobilising local / endogenous resources	30%	70%
Improving local community social capital and cohesion	39%	59%
Strengthening economic linkages among local actors	50%	48%
Finding / implementing innovative solutions to local problems.	32%	66%

Legend: ■ Very/ important and achievable ■ Very/ important and difficult ■ Not important (achievable/difficult)

- In comparison to the EU sample, responding UK LAGs ranked the importance and achievability of some LEADER effects rather differently.

- The top very important and achievable LEADER effect from UK respondents was strengthening public private partnerships. The top very important and achievable effect in the EU sample was cooperating with other LAG territories. This ranked 7th in the UK with only 36% stating that is was very/important and achievable.

- 70% of responding UK LAGs stated that mobilising local/endogenous resources was very/important and difficult, in comparison with 56% of the EU sample, whereas strengthening economic linkages among local actors was very/important and achievable for 50% of UK LAGs compared to 37% in the EU sample.

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 40

Level of Effects on LEADER Implementation

Category	Very Negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very Positive
Level of MA/PA conditions, reporting requirements	45%	20%	30%	5%	
Time taken to approve selected projects	25%	48%	20%	8%	
The balance between reducing risk and encouraging innovative solutions	45%	38%	13%	5%	
Audit and possible sanctions	30%	35%	30%	5%	
Reduction of funding LEADER under RDP	3%	20%	23%		
RDP level limitations on possible LDS themes, eligibility or selected criteria	20%	40%	18%	8%	
Effects on local decision making of projects by the MA/PA	18%	20%	43%	5%	
Limitations on staff	20%	35%	25%	5%	
% of LAG budget available for running costs and animation	13%	35%	28%	25%	
Possibility of multi funding		5%	33%	15%	5%
Continuity of LAG membership	10%	15%	33%	23%	15%
Increase in funding for LEADER under RDP			21%	15%	8%

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.
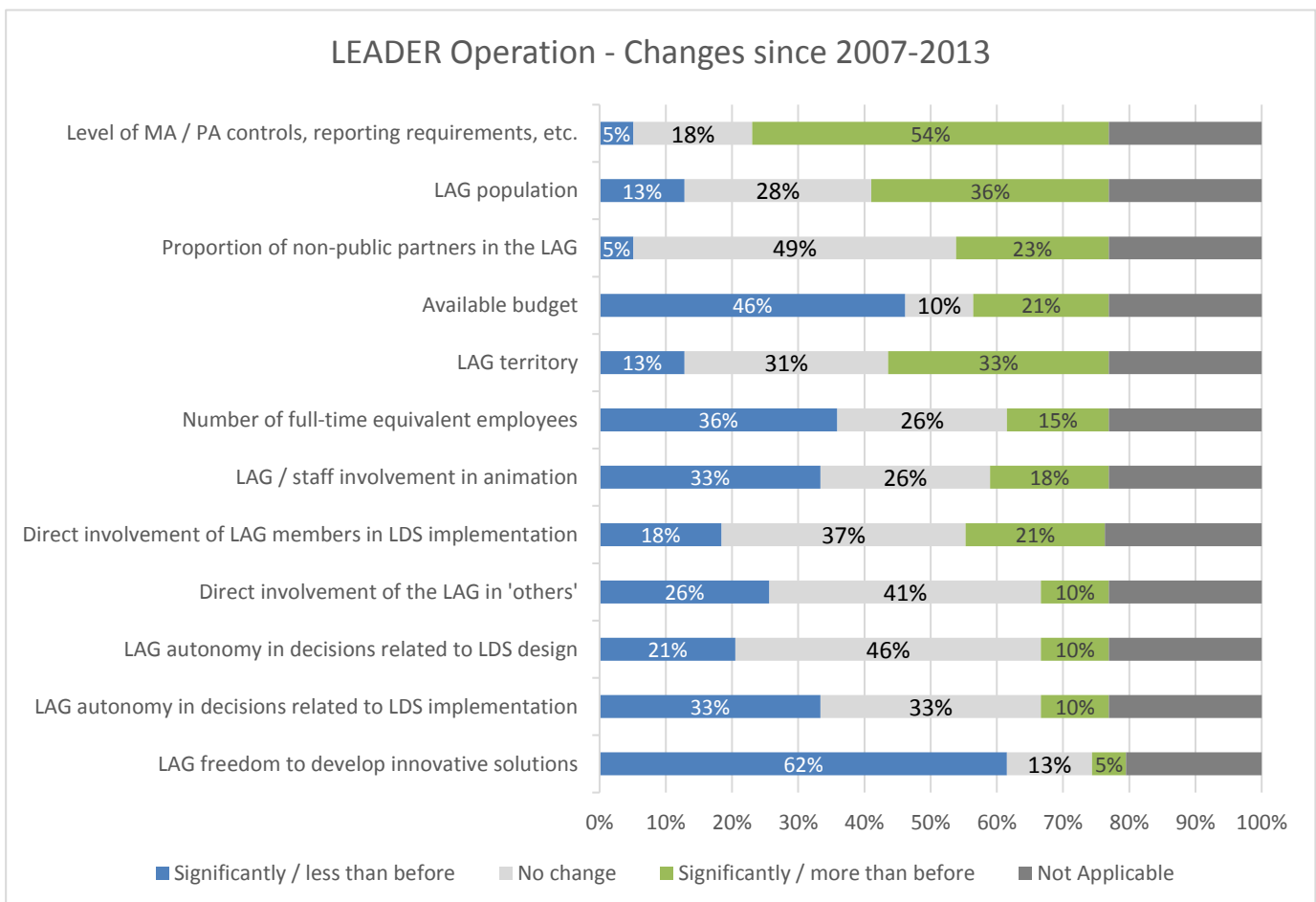
- 83% of responding UK LAGs found the effect of the balance between reducing risk and encouraging innovative solutions was negative or very negative, in comparison to 63% in the EU sample.

- 25% of responding UK LAGs stated that continuity of LAG membership was negative or very negative in comparison to 11% in the EU sample.

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 39

LEADER Operation - Changes since 2007-2013

Aspect	Significantly / less than before	No change	Significantly / more than before
Level of MA / PA controls, reporting requirements, etc.	5%	18%	54%
LAG population	13%	28%	36%
Proportion of non-public partners in the LAG	5%	49%	23%
Available budget	46%	10%	21%
LAG territory	13%	31%	33%
Number of full-time equivalent employees	36%	26%	15%
LAG / staff involvement in animation	33%	26%	18%
Direct involvement of LAG members in LDS implementation	18%	37%	21%
Direct involvement of the LAG in 'others'	26%	41%	10%
LAG autonomy in decisions related to LDS design	21%	46%	10%
LAG autonomy in decisions related to LDS implementation	33%	33%	10%
LAG freedom to develop innovative solutions	62%	13%	5%

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

- Overall the UK respondents answered the questions in a similar way as the EU sample, with the exception of LAG freedom to develop innovative solutions, where 62% of UK respondents recorded significantly/less than before, in comparison to 37% in the EU sample.

- A larger proportion of UK LAGs recorded significantly /less than before for both the number of full time employees (36% vs 20%) and for LAG / staff involvement in animation 33% vs 18%).

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 39

Activities LAG Staff Spend Most Time On

Activity	1st	2nd	3rd
Supporting project development and implementation	17	8	5
Financial & administrative management of LAG and local projects	12	15	2
Reporting and communication with the MA/PA (including regional intermediaries)	6	10	8
Reporting to /working with LAG board /LAG members	1	2	12
Animation, capacity building and training for local stakeholders (inc LAG members)	1	3	2
Developing / managing cooperation projects.	1		3
Working with other LAGs, the regional/ national rural network and the ENRD		1	2
Monitoring and reviewing the LDS			2
Supporting innovation at the LAG level			2
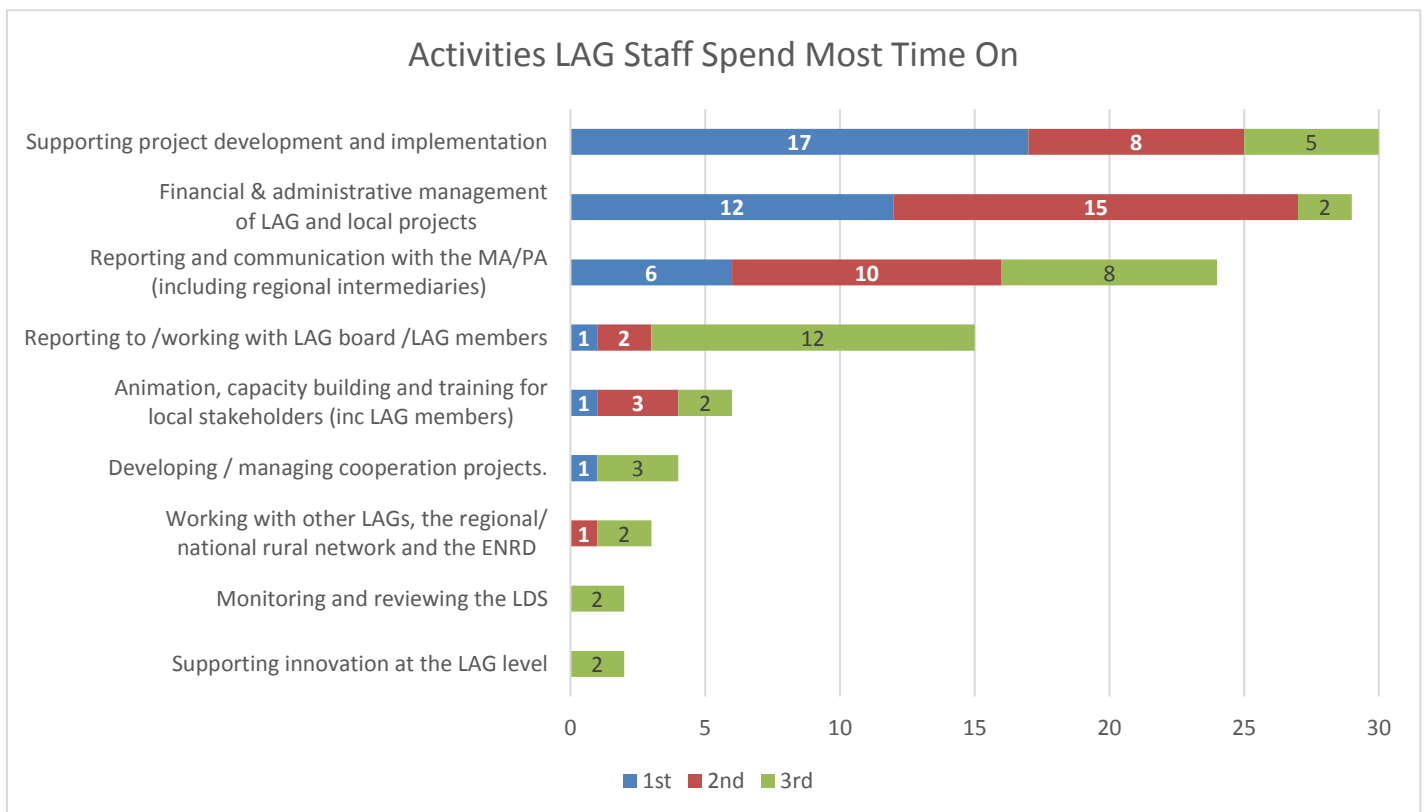
- UK LAGs responded in a very similar way to the EU sample.

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 41
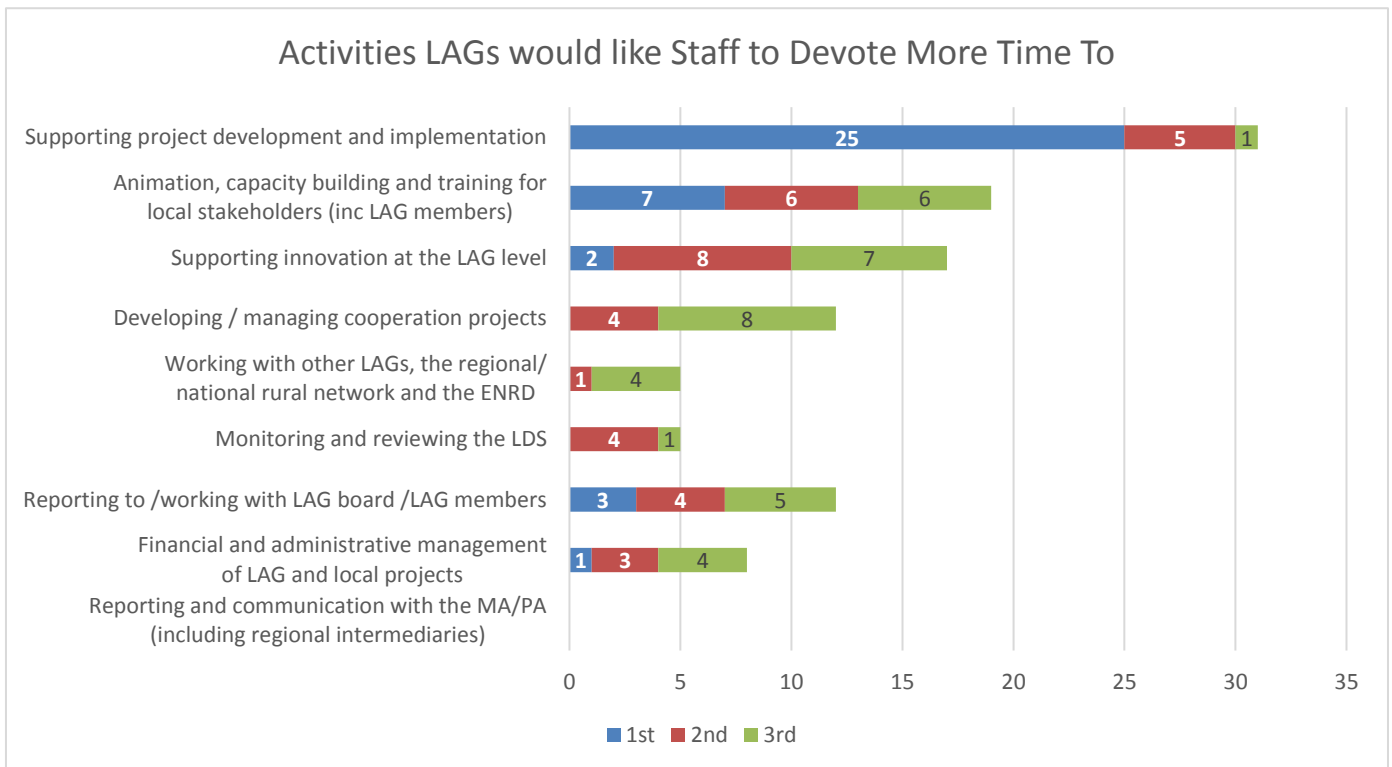
- UK LAG responses were very similar to the overall sample. Supporting project development and implementation was an even stronger priority in the UK than the wider sample.

- A greater proportion of responding UK LAGs wanted staff to devote more time to reporting to/ working with LAG board/members and to financial and administrative management of LAG projects than in the EU sample.

- Proportionately fewer responding UK LAGs wanted staff to devote more time to working with other LAGs, regional/national network and the ENRD and monitoring and reviewing the LDS than the EU sample.
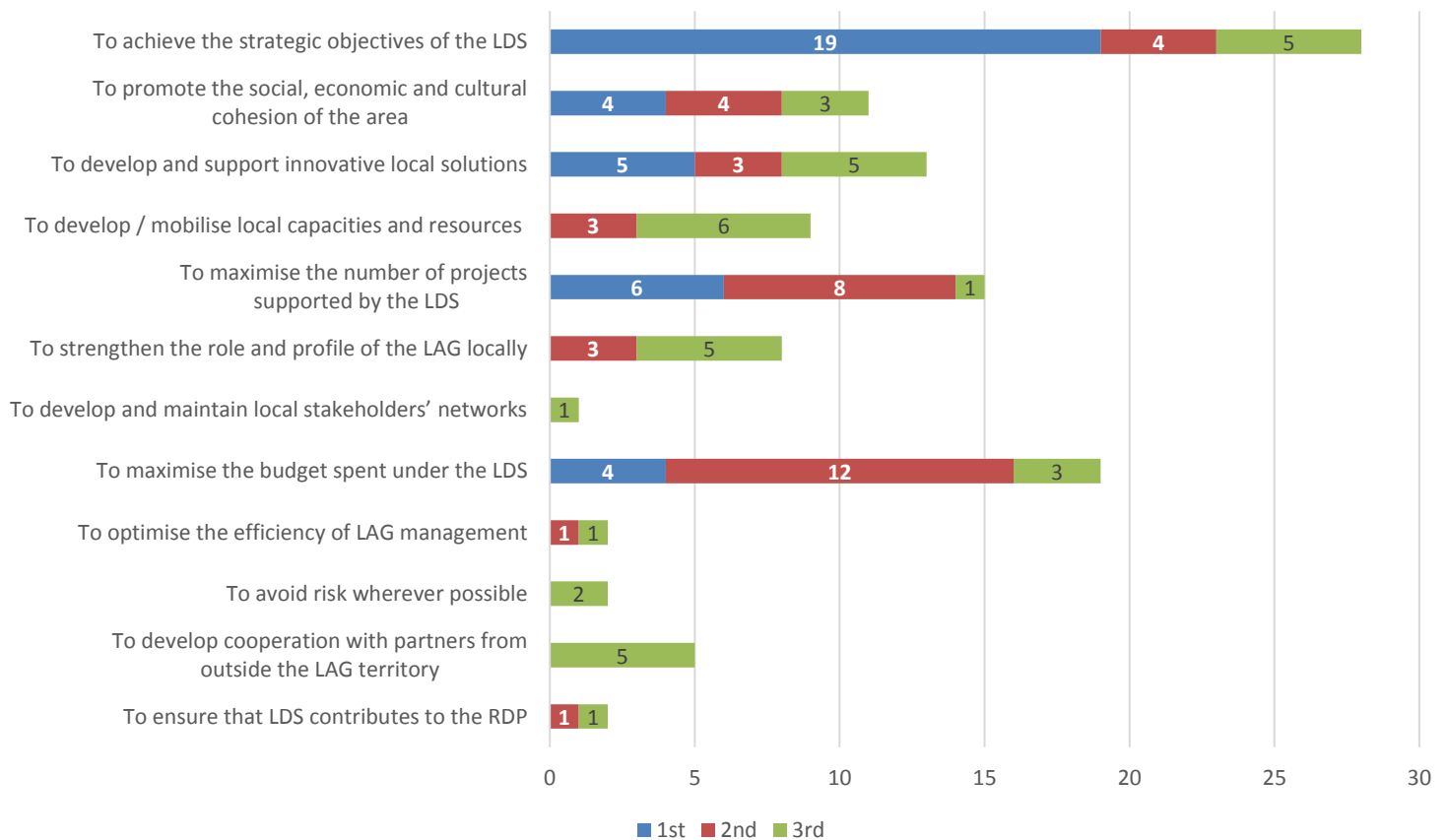
Question 21

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 40

Importance of Operational Priorities to LAGs

Priority	1st	2nd	3rd
To achieve the strategic objectives of the LDS	19	4	5
To promote the social, economic and cultural cohesion of the area	4	4	3
To develop and support innovative local solutions	5	3	5
To develop / mobilise local capacities and resources		3	6
To maximise the number of projects supported by the LDS	6	8	1
To strengthen the role and profile of the LAG locally		3	5
To develop and maintain local stakeholders' networks			1
To maximise the budget spent under the LDS	4	12	3
To optimise the efficiency of LAG management		1	1
To avoid risk wherever possible			2
To develop cooperation with partners from outside the LAG territory			5
To ensure that LDS contributes to the RDP		1	1

- The second and third operational priorities in the UK and EU LAGs samples were different. UK respondents placed considerably greater importance on maximising the budget spent under the LDS and maximising the number of projects supported by the LDS than did the EU sample.
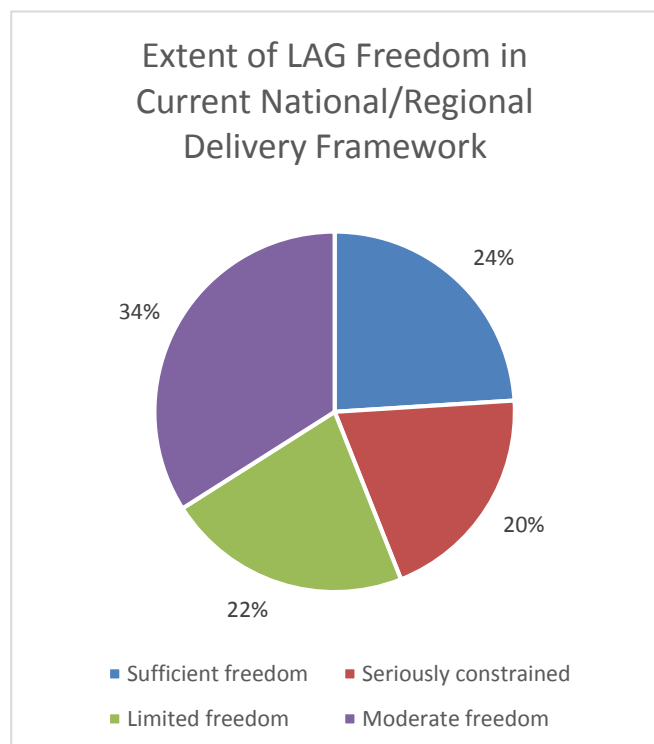
Question 22

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 41

- UK responding LAGs rated the extent of their freedom as broadly similar to the EU sample but with a higher percentage of LAGs feeling seriously constrained (20% vs 11%) and having sufficient freedom (24% vs 17%).

Extent of LAG Freedom in Current National/Regional Delivery Framework

24%

20%

22%

34%

- Sufficient freedom
- Seriously constrained
- Limited freedom
- Moderate freedom

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 40

Ways LAGs Communicate with the Wider Public
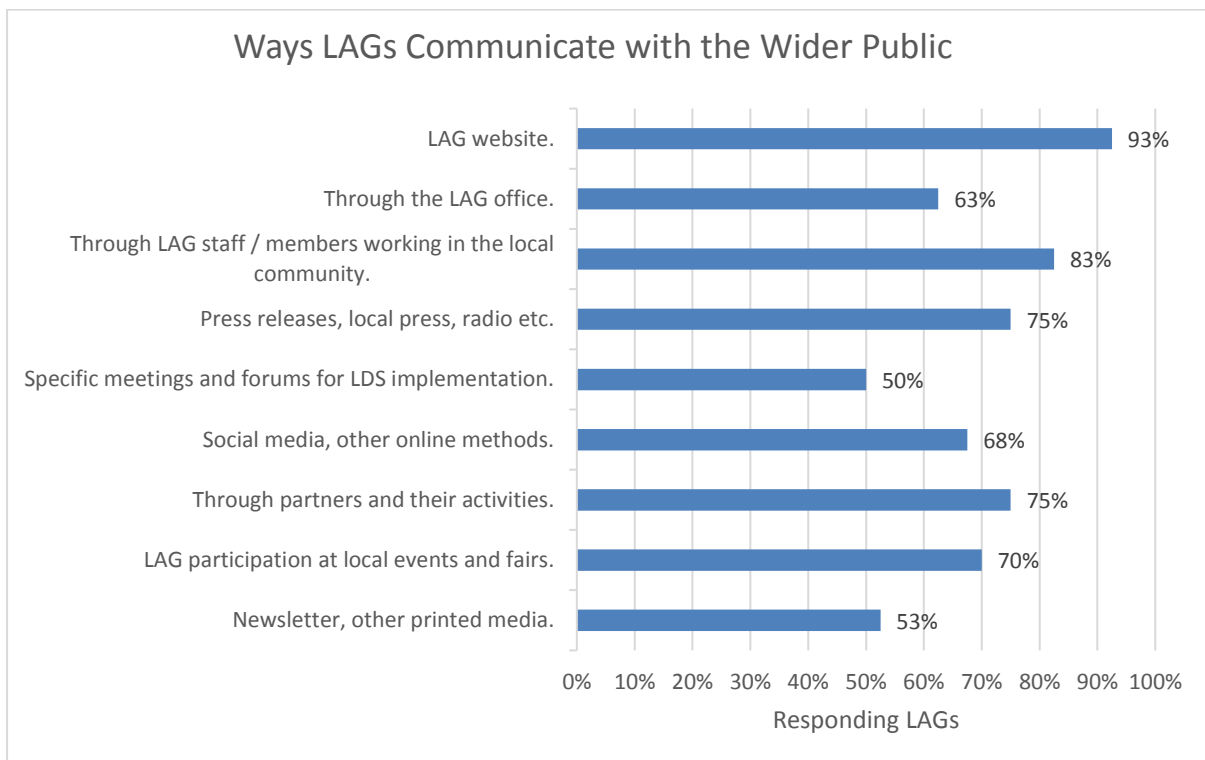
- UK LAGs report communicating more through LAG staff / members working in the local community (83% vs 66%), partners and their activity (75% vs 54%) and LAG participation at local events and fairs (70% vs 52%) than the EU sample.

- UK LAGs communicated less through the LAG office (63% vs 71%) and specific meetings and forums for LDS implementation (50% vs 62%) than the EU sample.

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 41
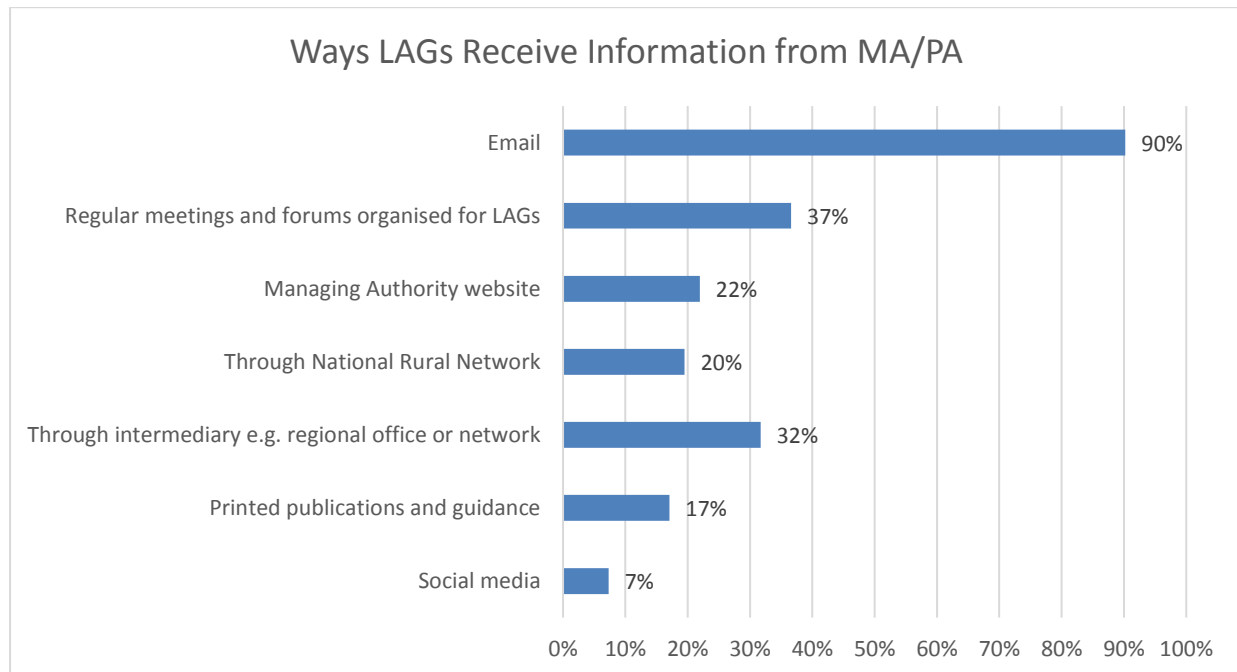
- Only 37% of UK LAGs report that they received information via regular meetings and forums organised for LAGs, in comparison to 68% of the EU sample.

- Less use of the National Rural Networks was reported here in the UK (20% vs 31%), similarly for the Managing Authority website (22% vs 34%).

- A higher percentage (32%) of responding UK LAGs received information from the MA/PA through intermediaries, than the EU sample (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 40
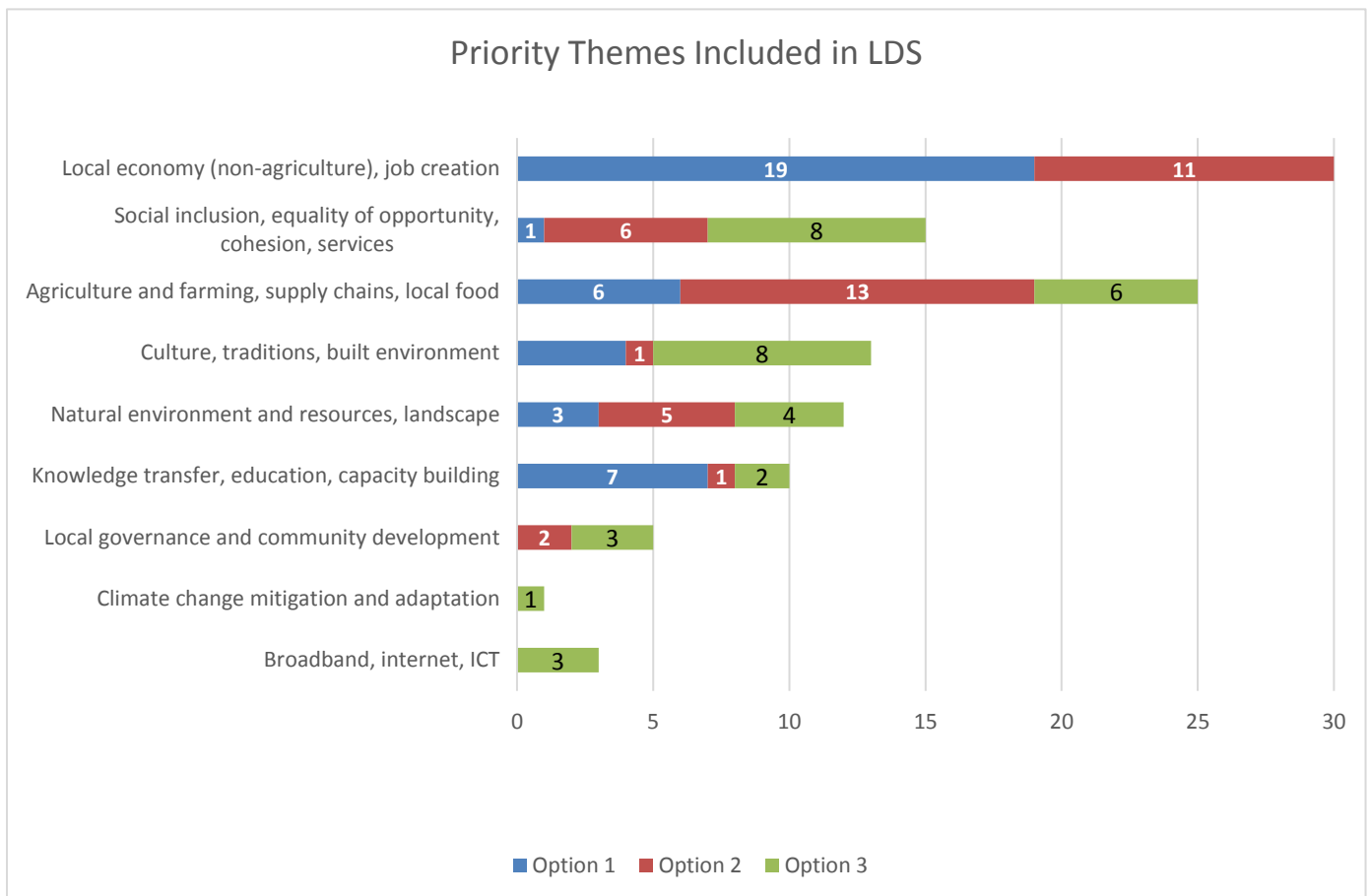
- Proportionally more UK LAGs LDS related to the agriculture and farming, supply chains, local food and broadband, internet, ICT themes than in the EU sample.
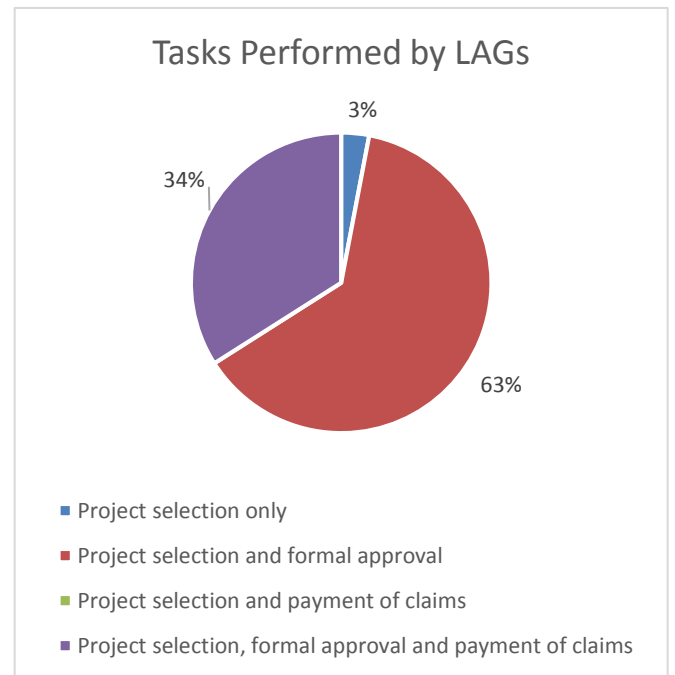
Question 26

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
- Project selection and formal approval
- Project selection and payment of claims
- Project selection, formal approval and payment of claims

Total Number of Responses 41

- A much larger percentage of respondents in the UK reported that they are responsible for project selection and formal approval (63% vs 30%) and project selection, formal approval and payment of claims (34% vs 19%) than the EU sample.

- Only 3% of UK LAGs responded that they carried out project selection only, compared to 48% of the EU sample.

Tasks Performed by LAGs

3%

34%

63%

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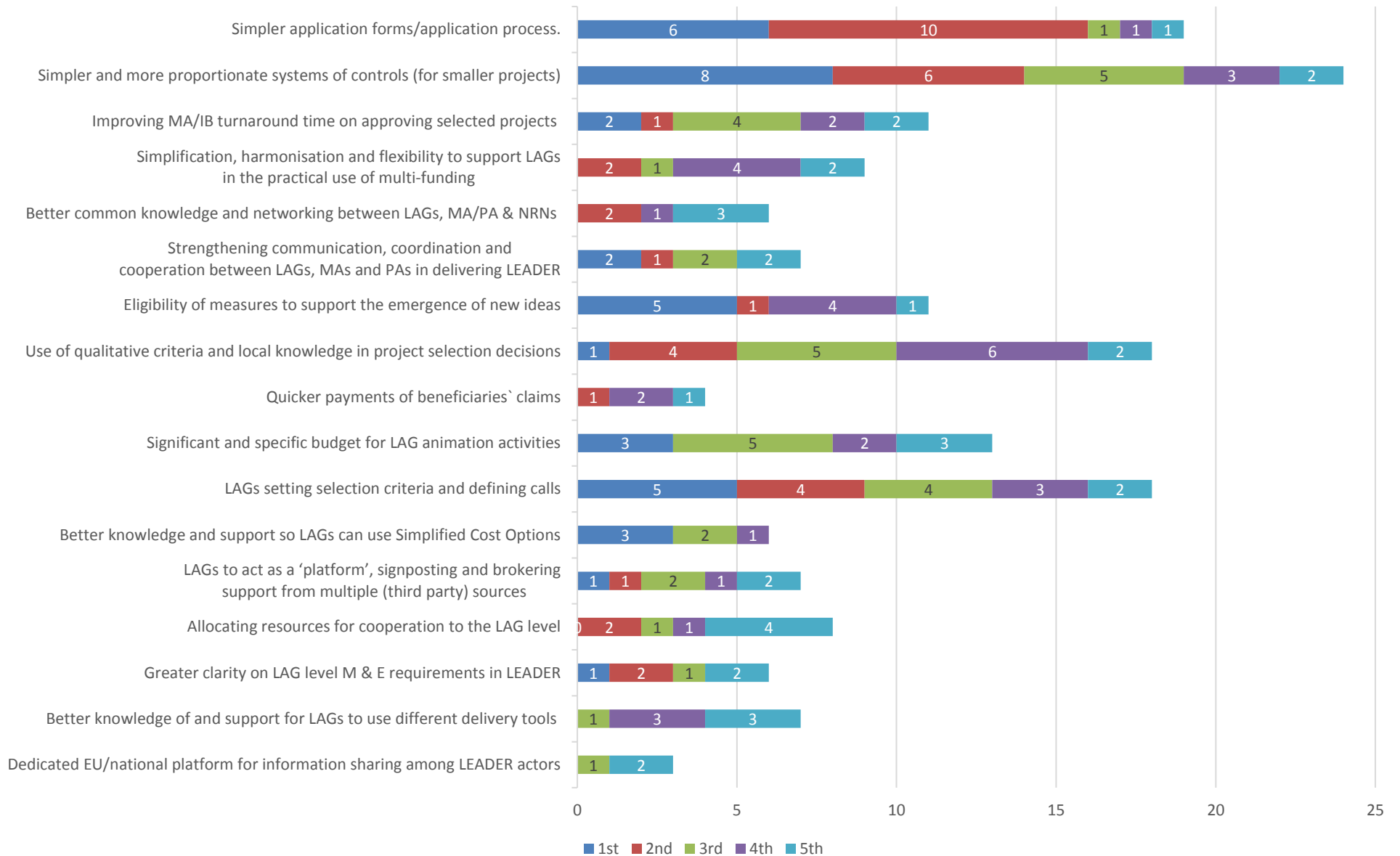
LEADER Improvements

Question 27

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 38

- Proportionately more responding UK than EU LAGs thought that the use of qualitative criteria and local knowledge in project selection criteria and LAGs setting selection criteria and defining calls were very important in improving implantation just now.

- UK LAGs placed markedly less emphasis than the EU sample on strengthening communication, coordination, and cooperation between LAGs, MAs and PAs in delivering LEADER and on better common knowledge between LAGs, MA/PA & NRN. Improving MA/IB turnaround time on approving selected projects was also a lower priority in the UK.

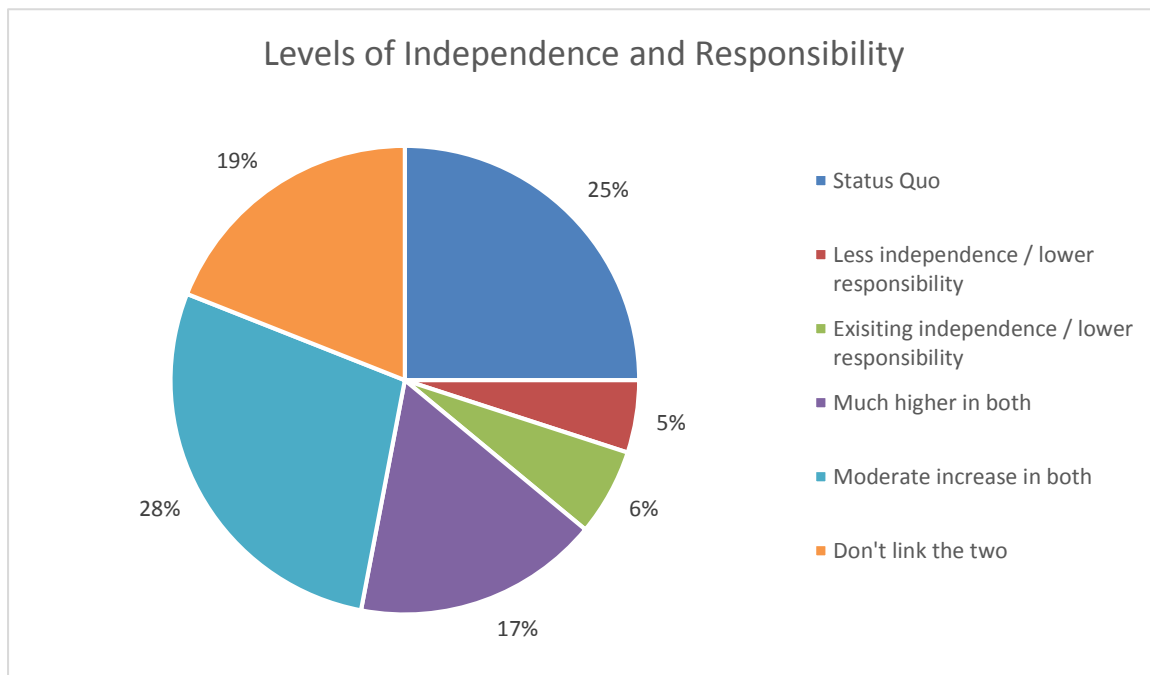**Most Important Changes to Improve Implementation Now**

Change	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Simpler application forms/application process.	6	10	1	1	1
Simpler and more proportionate systems of controls (for smaller projects)	8	6	5	3	2
Improving MA/IB turnaround time on approving selected projects	2	1	4	2	2
Simplification, harmonisation and flexibility to support LAGs in the practical use of multi-funding		2	1	4	2
Better common knowledge and networking between LAGs, MA/PA & NRNs		2	1		3
Strengthening communication, coordination and cooperation between LAGs, MAs and PAs in delivering LEADER	2	1	2	2	
Eligibility of measures to support the emergence of new ideas	5	1		4	1
Use of qualitative criteria and local knowledge in project selection decisions	1	4	5	6	2
Quicker payments of beneficiaries` claims		1		2	1
Significant and specific budget for LAG animation activities	3		5	2	3
LAGs setting selection criteria and defining calls	5	4	4	3	2
Better knowledge and support so LAGs can use Simplified Cost Options	3		2	1	
LAGs to act as a 'platform', signposting and brokering support from multiple (third party) sources	1	1	2	1	2
Allocating resources for cooperation to the LAG level	0	2	1	1	4
Greater clarity on LAG level M & E requirements in LEADER	1	2	1		2
Better knowledge of and support for LAGs to use different delivery tools			1	3	3
Dedicated EU/national platform for information sharing among LEADER actors			1		2

Legend: ■ 1st ■ 2nd ■ 3rd ■ 4th ■ 5th

European Network for Rural Development

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 – 36

Levels of Independence and Responsibility

- Status Quo — 25%
- Less independence / lower responsibility — 5%
- Exisiting independence / lower responsibility — 6%
- Much higher in both — 17%
- Moderate increase in both — 28%
- Don't link the two — 19%

- The responses from UK LAGs were very similar to the EU sample.
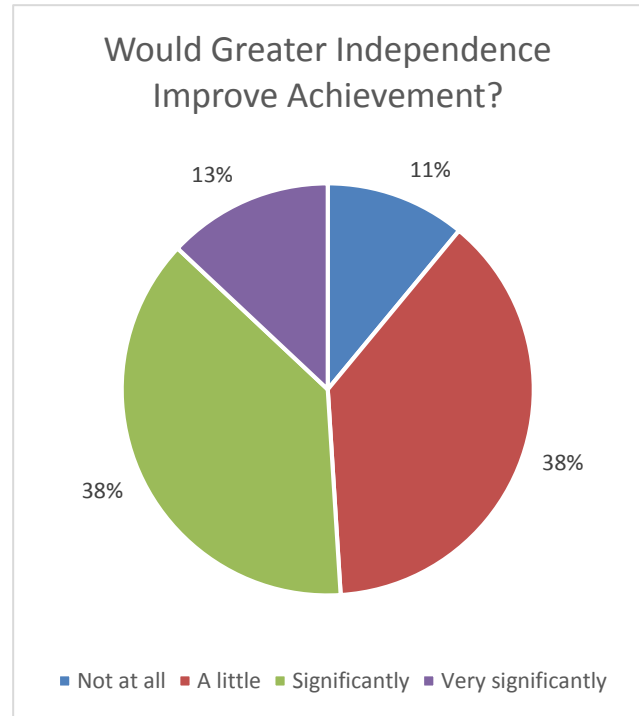
Question 29

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 37

- The responses from the UK LAGs were very similar to the EU sample.

Would Greater Independence Improve Achievement?

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

Values: 13%, 11%, 38%, 38%

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 38

Would a Centralised Support Service Improve LAGs' Level of Achievement?

- Not at all
- A little
- Significantly
- Very significantly
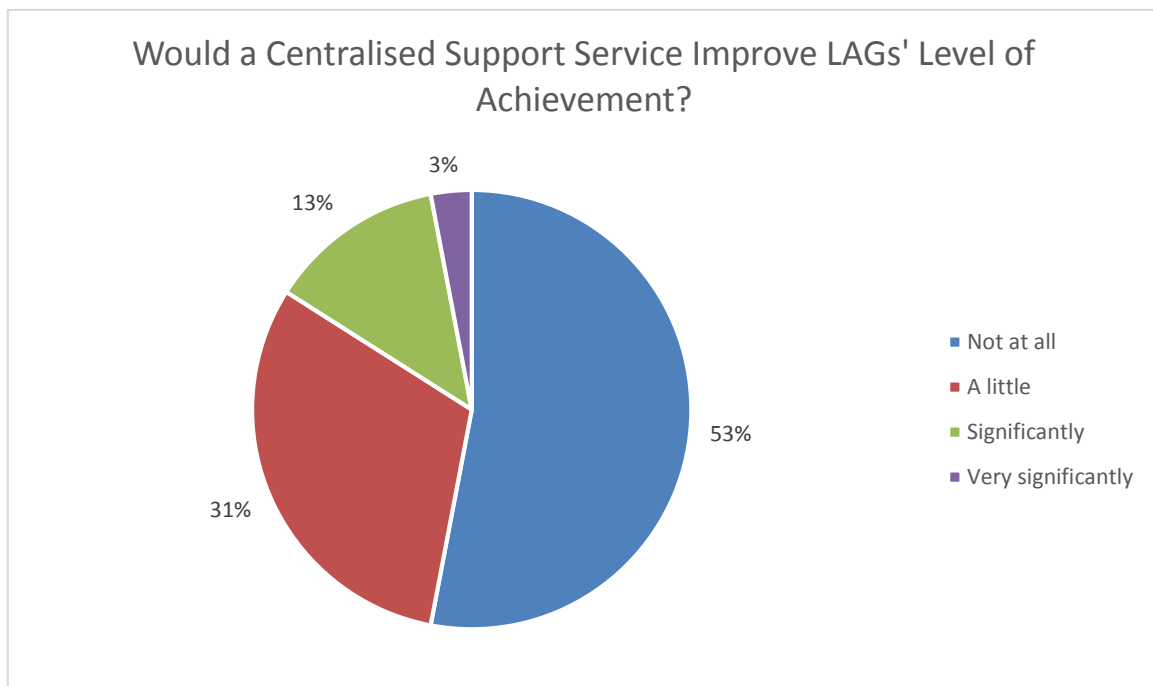
- A larger proportion of the UK respondents thought that a centralised support service would not at all improve the LAGs' level of achievements compared to the EU sample (53% vs 36%).

- At the same time, a much smaller proportion of UK LAGs thought that it would improve LAGs' achievement significantly or very significantly in comparison to the EU sample (16% vs 37%).
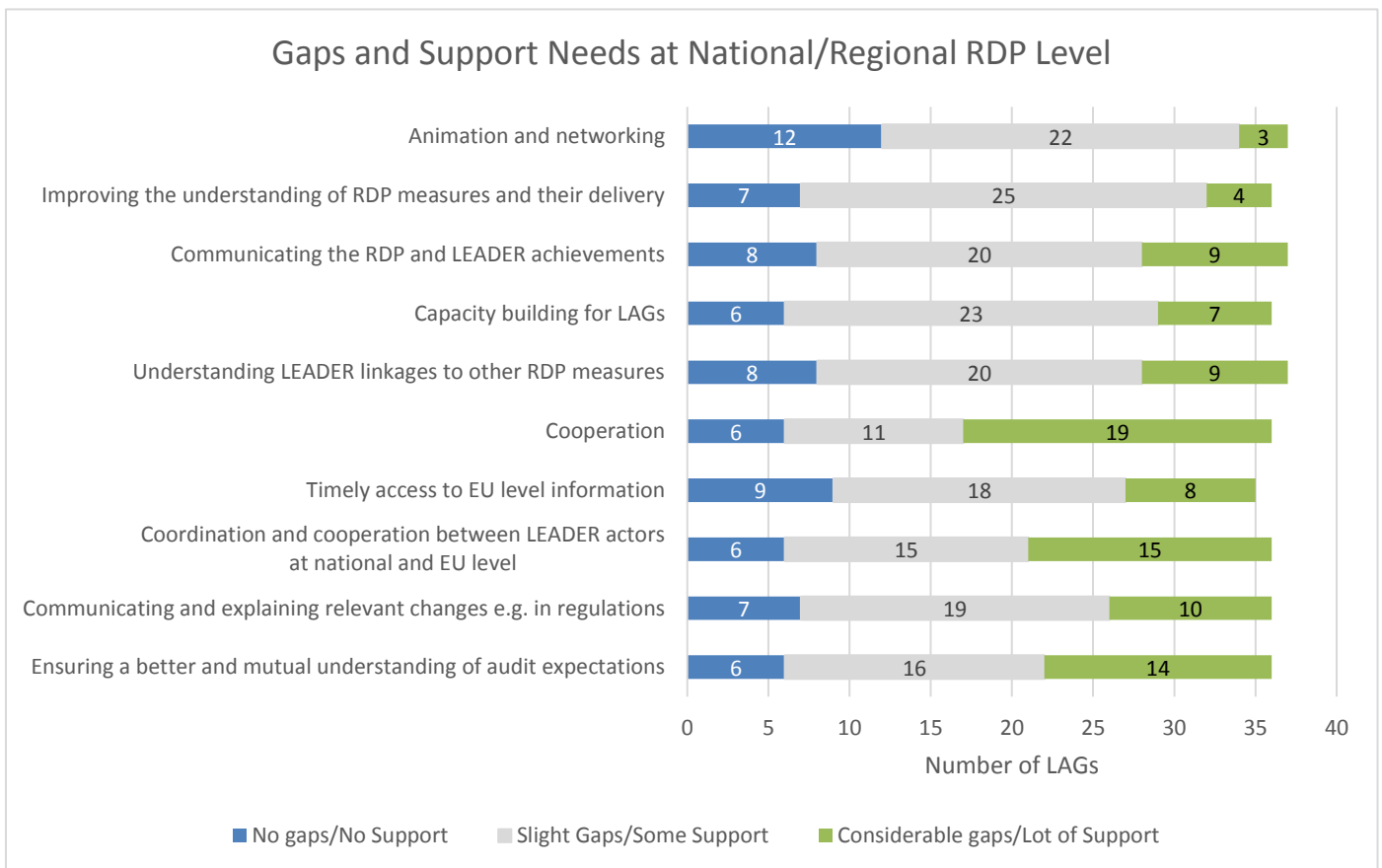
Question 31

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 38

Gaps and Support Needs at National/Regional RDP Level

- The responding UK LAGs identified many of the same areas of considerable gaps/ lot of support needed as did the EU sample, the greatest difference was that they identified cooperation as being the area with greatest gaps and needs.
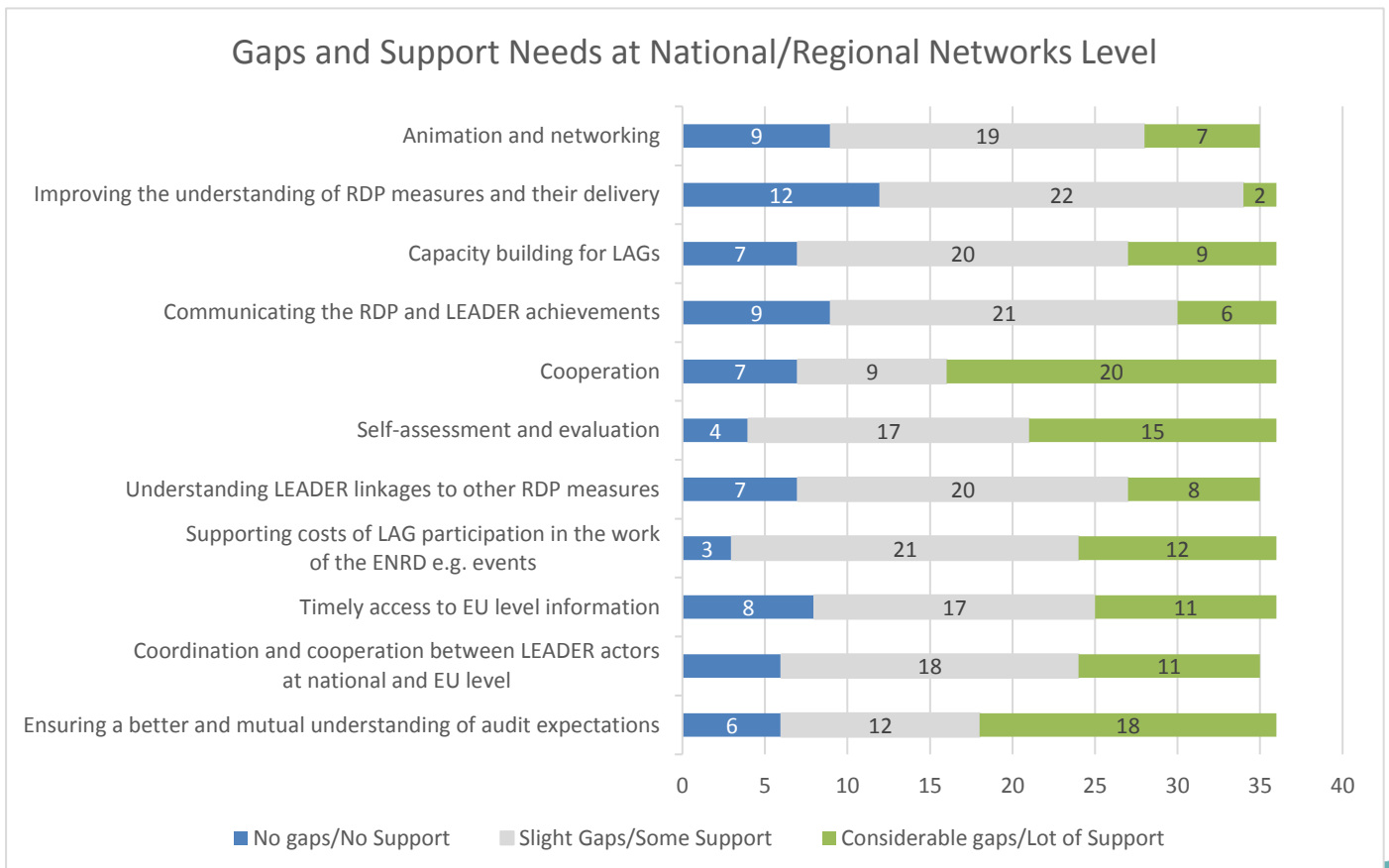
Question 32

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 37

Gaps and Support Needs at National/Regional Networks Level

Category	No gaps/No Support	Slight Gaps/Some Support	Considerable gaps/Lot of Support
Animation and networking	9	19	7
Improving the understanding of RDP measures and their delivery	12	22	2
Capacity building for LAGs	7	20	9
Communicating the RDP and LEADER achievements	9	21	6
Cooperation	7	9	20
Self-assessment and evaluation	4	17	15
Understanding LEADER linkages to other RDP measures	7	20	8
Supporting costs of LAG participation in the work of the ENRD e.g. events	3	21	12
Timely access to EU level information	8	17	11
Coordination and cooperation between LEADER actors at national and EU level	6	18	11
Ensuring a better and mutual understanding of audit expectations	6	12	18

- The responding UK LAGs again identified cooperation as having the most considerable gaps/lot of support needed, in comparison to the EU sample where cooperation was ranked seventh as the area most in need of support.

- The need for ensuring a better and mutual understanding of audit expectations was a higher priority in the UK than the wider sample.

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 37


Priority of Support Needs from ENRD
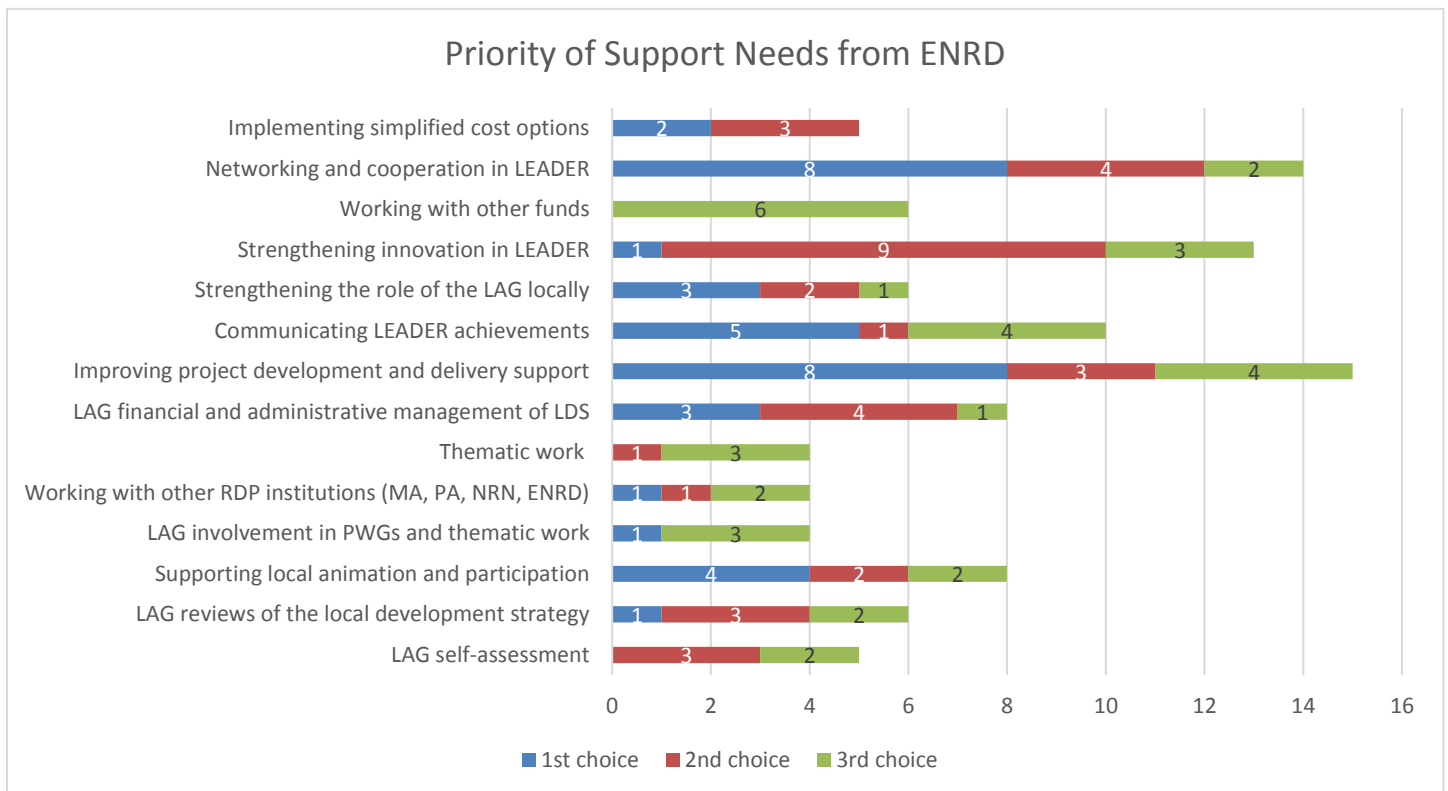
- The responding UK LAGs identified rather different priorities for the EU sample.

- Improving project development and delivery support as the highest priority for support from ENRD in the UK in comparison to the EU sample where it ranked 7th.

- Supporting local animation and participation was also ranked proportionately higher by the responding UK LAGs than in the EU sample.

- Implementing simplified costs options was a much lower priority in the UK than EU where it ranked first.

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 35
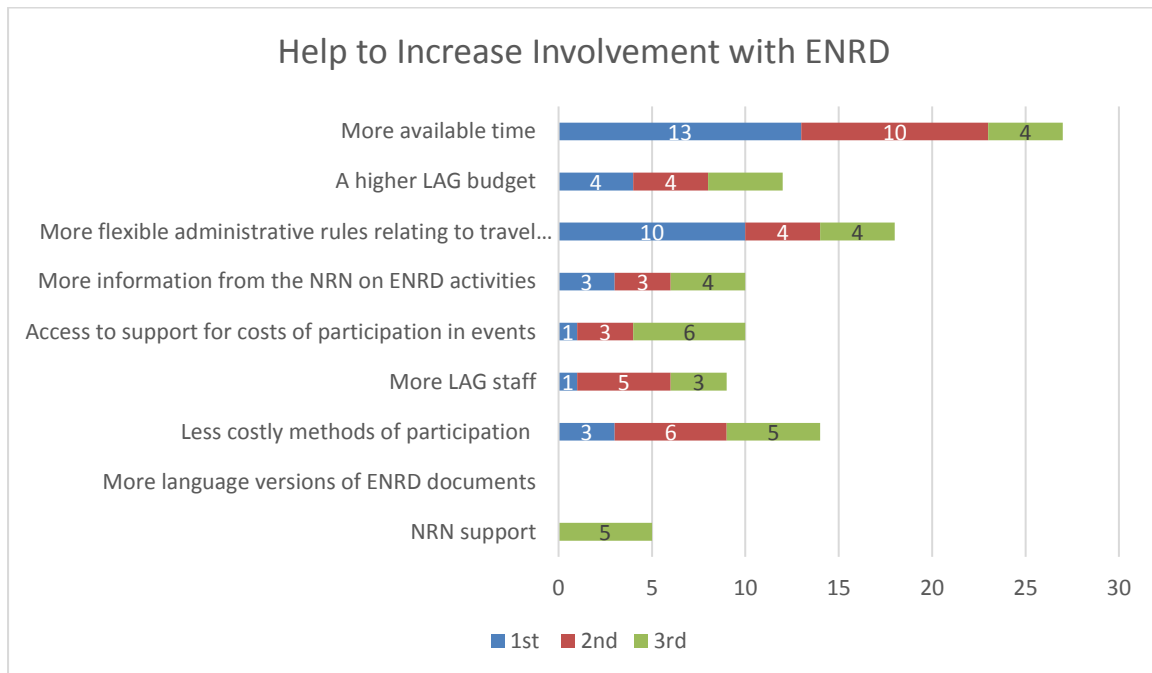
- UK LAGs responses were largely similar to those given in the EU sample. However, there was rather less emphasis given to a higher LAG budget and slightly more to less costly methods of participation, than in the EU sample.

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 37

Importance of Self-assessment of LDS to Improve LAGs' Operation
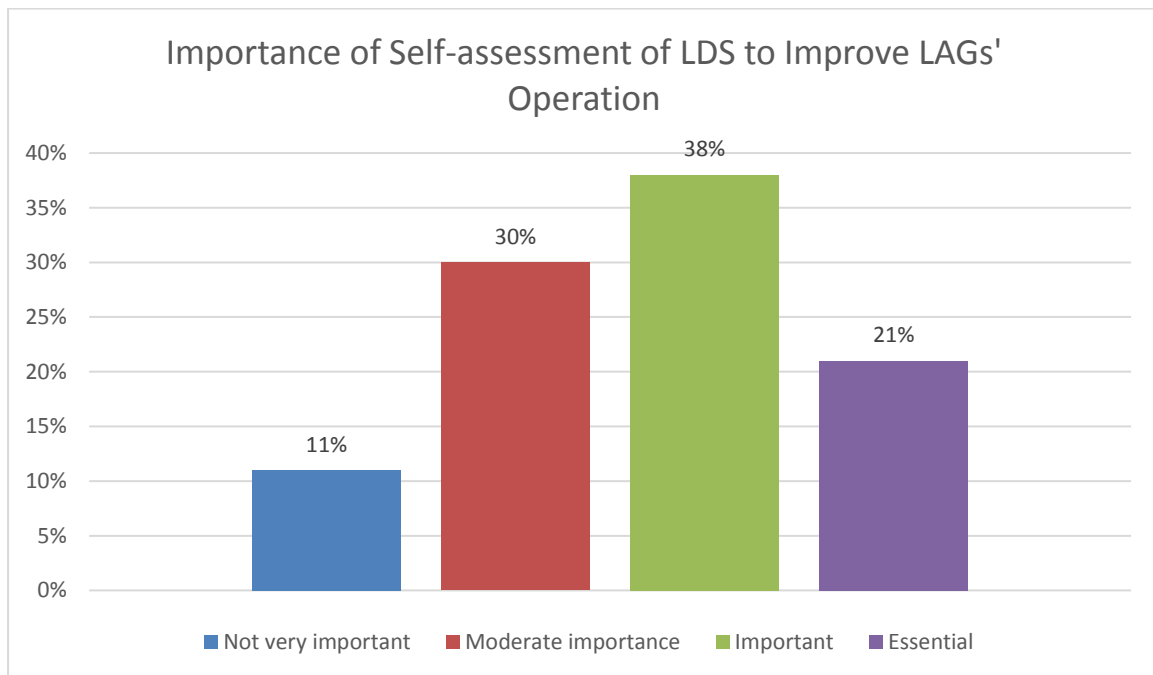
- 41% of responding UK LAGs thought that self-assessment was not very or moderately important in comparison to 30% in the EU sample.

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 37
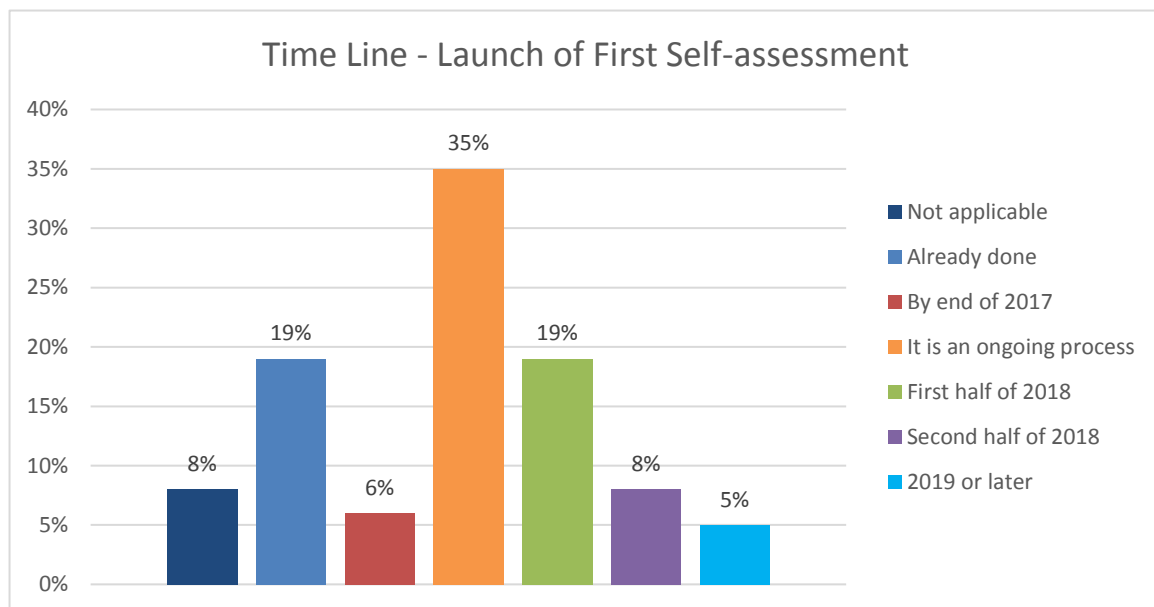
- A much higher percentage of responding UK LAGs carry out self-assessment as on ongoing process than the EU sample (35% vs 18%).

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 – 76%
- No – 24%

Total Number of Responses 37