Towards Prospering Rural Areas

SARD LEADER for community driven rural development initiatives in Gagauzia, Taraclia and neighboring rural communities

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA 2016-2018

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What is the SARD Programme?

The Support to Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) Programme is a three-year initiative of the European Union implemented by UNDP in the Republic of Moldova.

The main objective of the programme is to foster confidence-building by targeting regions and territorial administrative units with special status.

The programme connects national and regional authorities and structures facilitating dialogue in the development of national strategies. The main programme components, implemented in a synergic and comprehensive way, aim to enhance community empowerment, develop local entrepreneurship and SMEs, encourage investment into small-scale infrastructure refurbishments and promote inter-municipal cooperation.

Implementation of LEADER (a French acronym meaning Links Between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy) and the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) approach is an innovative, cross-cutting measure of the programme.

The LEADER Initiative

LEADER (a French acronym meaning Links Between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy) is an EU initiative, a method and programme instrument to support locally-driven rural development interventions to reinvent rural areas and create local jobs.

The first LEADER programme started in EU Member Countries in 1991.

Because of its development efficiency and popularity in rural communities, LEADER still exists in the EU. It has 26 years of experience in thousands of rural areas where the programme has successfully been implemented.

Since 2013, the LEADER method has been expanded to apply to coastal and urban areas under the title ‘Community-Led Local Development’ (CLLD), and it has also been extended geographically.

It has been implemented in EU pre-accession and neighbouring countries with the aid of EU and other donor-financed programmes.

The key actors of all local LEADER/Community-Led Local Development initiatives are the so-called Local Action Groups (LAGs) formed by local partners in a bottom-up way.

The LAGs are responsible for local governance in development and

LEADER principles

‘Go local’ by implementing the territorial, bottom-up and partnership approach; focus on integrated development, sustainability and inclusiveness. The development process is managed locally, and networking and cooperation ensure mutual benefit from the experience.

represent local authorities, businesses and civil society. LAGs decide on the territorial delineation of their activities, establish formal partnerships, prepare and agree on integrated local rural development strategies, and identify and implement local development actions.

LEADER in Moldova

Local implementation of the SARD LEADER Initiative started with an awareness-raising campaign aimed at mobilizing local partners in targeted regions. The result was the creation of eight local development partnerships, covering the greater part of the rural areas of Gagauzia and Taraclia, and rural communities of neighbouring districts.

Following the bottom-up, territorial principles, the eight partnerships of local public, business and civil society representatives have formalized their Local Action Groups, which are the flagship LAGs in Moldova.

To accord with the principle of integrated development, they have designed their strategic action plan, including economic, social, cultural and environmental actions. Coaching, mentoring and technical assistance and guidance for each milestone have been provided by SARD to the eight LAGs. SARD also creates the necessary conditions for networking between the LAGs.

The activities of each LAG cover a group of villages with populations of between 11,000 and 34,500. The number of LAG members is about 30 on average, with the balance of each stakeholder group represented by 30 per cent.

One of the objectives of the SARD LEADER Initiative is to gather the Gagauzian and Taraclian implementation experiences and provide support for the institutionalization of the LEADER approach in Moldova.
LAG ECO Bugeac

The communities of Avdarma, Chiriet-Lunga, Joltai, Besghioz, Tvardita and Valea Perjei, located in the Bugeac steppe geographical area, work together in this LAG (22,369 inhabitants). All localities in the LAG territory have a strong multi-ethnic and multicultural tradition. Every village has a local museum and craftsmen representing different cultures: Bulgarian, Moldovan and Gagauzian. Avdarma is the historical and ecological heart of the Bugeac steppe.

Sergeri, an unemployed resident of the village of Chiriet-Lunga, has created a drum for the first time in his life. With all his love for the small motherland, he revives traditional festivities such as the singing of Christmas carols and introduces Gagauz traditional percussion instruments to the younger generation. His drum reflects Gagauzian firmness and openness by using two types of skin (cow and goat). Sergei is famous all over the LAG. He is now planning a new project – cow-skin shoes. All the inhabitants of ECO Bugeac would thus be able to dance in one hora.
famous for its surrounding nature, old steppe springs and its different activities and initiatives, including a parachuting cup, a school robotics club and a local Media Centre. Tvardita, a small town, has great economic potential that can be used for local development, including a free economy zone.

This historical and ecological potential provides a common basis for territorial cooperation. The strategic mission of ECO Bugeac LAG is social and economic development by ensuring modern comfortable and safe living conditions while actively promoting organic agricultural production. The common vision is to develop the South Moldovan tourist centre through links between ECO Bugeac localities, aiming to promote rural and sports tourism and focusing on the development of ecological production in small farms.

LAG Gagauz Korafilari
Gagauz Pattern

LAG Gagauz Korafilari unites the communities of Baurci, Besalma, Chirsova, Ferapontievca, Gaidar and Tomai (31,452 inhabitants). One of the advantages of the LAG is that the villages are close to regional routes, which positively influences the development of local business. At the same time, a favourable climate, fertile soil and water source from local lakes are important for agricultural development. A common purpose of territorial cooperation is to reinforce local culture. Each locality has a strong cultural ensemble: Ukrainian, Bulgarian and Gagauzian.

There are many craftsmen, and the conditions are promising for the creation of workshops to produce traditional costumes.
Tomai is well-developed in terms of different business sectors: agriculture, services and manufactories. There are several famous regional products and relevant festivals, including the traditional Gagauzian Carpet Festival in Gaidar and the Wine Festival in Tomai, complemented by the unique and delicious local cuisine. The LAG’s mission is to reinvent traditional activities and develop rural tourism based on the promotion of the multi-ethnic local cuisine and cultural values. The vision of the LAG is to become the largest rural cultural centre in the region, with well-developed infrastructure and tourism aimed at sustainable growth of living standards.

LAG Cișmeaua Sudului
Southern Water Spring

This LAG is situated in the south-west of the Republic of Moldova, not far from the country’s southernmost point (Giurgiulesti International Port). The territory consists of three localities, Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Cismichioi and Etulia, populated mainly by Gagauz and Moldovan people. The localities are part of the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia and the district of Cahul (10,987 inhabitants).

The villages in LAG Cișmeaua Sudului have a rich history and local culture. The territory is characterized by its natural heritage and a lovely local cuisine.
There is brilliant potential for wine cultivation. Cattle cultivation and the production of milk and cheese is increasing, but still has potential. In the village of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, artisans sew traditional clothes and work with wood. The village of Chismichioi has a Media Centre and a very active youth network. The local business sector is relatively experienced and civil society is vigorous.

The purpose of LAG Cişmea Sudului (defined in their strategic mission) is to foster sustainable local economic growth, tourist attractiveness and territorial cohesion within the microregion. In five years, based on the commonly agreed strategic vision, their territory will be known for the diversity of its locally processed food, its attractive tourist locations and the quality of its social services.

LAG ECO Düz Ialpugel

**ECO Düz Yalpugel**

ECO Düz Yalpugel gathers together the villages of **Borceag, Congaz, Cotovscoe, Chioselia Mare** and **Cietu** from the Autonomous Territorial Authority of Gagauzia and neighbouring districts, thus representing an example of inter-ethnic cooperation at the local level (17,193 inhabitants).

It is difficult to translate the name of this LAG from Gagauzian to English. The name refers to their ecological approach, the value of truthfulness and the River Yalpugel, which runs along the steppe, bringing life-giving water. Within the LAG, Congaz is famous as the biggest village in Europe. Lots of young people are involved in the LAG. Business representatives attract many young people, who plan to open new businesses, especially relating to apiculture. There is a need identified by LAG members to support local ethnic cultures and traditions. The LAG’s strategic document includes the following line: ‘We, LAG ECO Düz Yalpugel, promote sustainable economic development by supporting the initiatives of diversification of our local economic activities and social and cultural infrastructure.’ In five years, LAG ECO DüZ Yalpugel aims to be known for its prosperous business environment, accessible social infrastructure and the attractiveness of its touristic locations.
The territory of LAG Zhemchuzhina Yuga comprises of 20 small multi-ethnic rural communities of Bulgarians, Gagauzians, Moldovans and Ukrainians in Vinogradovca, Budai, Musaitu, Salcia, Alboța de Sus, Alboța de Jos, Carbalia, Burlaceni and Moscovei. It is in the south-west of the Republic of Moldova, part of the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia and the districts of Taraclia and Cahul (13,850 inhabitants).

The landscape combines hills and valleys, with Salcia Mica, Salcia Mare and other small rivers flowing along them. Two natural reserves and several lakes are located in the territory.

The main economic activities are growing grain and wine grapes and livestock farming, mainly sheep. Ciumai Winery, one of the most well-known winemakers in the Bugac steppe, is also situated here. Bee-keeping is becoming more widespread within the territory.

The fruit preserving (table grapes, plums) infrastructure, and local food processing (dry plums, juice making, etc.) are to be developed in several localities. The communities plan to update public utilities and social infrastructure to ensure better living conditions for the residents and to support service providers (commerce, craft, accommodations) and cultural initiatives to increase the tourist attractiveness of the region.

The strategic objectives of the LAG are the diversification of economic activities in the microregion, ensuring access to quality public services and utilities and the revitalization of the public spaces and sustainable development of the natural resources.
LAG Bugeac Kilim

Bugeac’s Carpet

LAG Bugeac Kilim’s villages, Balabanu, Corten, Cazaclia, Cealic and Svetlii, are located next to the Chisinau–Ismail and Chisinau–Gurgulesti roads (14,462 inhabitants). The local lake unites three of the localities: Balabanu, Corten and Cazaclia. Svetlii Technical College is famous in South Moldova. Important archaeological research has been conducted in the LAG territory.

The purpose of the LAG is to promote socially-oriented small businesses based on educational, scientific and entrepreneurial cooperation to motivate local citizens not to migrate, or encourage them to come home. LAG Kilim Budzhaka has identified some special local initiatives. There is a plan to open a mini-zoo and to revitalize an old mill. There are craftsmen in the territory, working with wood.

For Afanasy Kol, an entrepreneur from the village of Cazaclia, the outdoor zoo is not just a business, but a way to unite the community with nature. When Afanasy bought some noble-bred rams from Austria, he wanted everyone to appreciate the unusual beauty and positive energy of the animals.
LAG Steaua Bugeac

The Bugeac Star

The villages of Bascalia, Bugeac, Borogani, Cioc-Maidan, Congazcicul de Sus and Dezghingea are united within this LAG (21,010 inhabitants). A strong partnership exists at the local level between the local authorities involved in the LEADER initiative.

Public institutions are active in generating projects for improving the public utilities and social infrastructure. Local business representatives practice various activities: grape, fruit and vegetable growing, fish farming, apiculture, etc. The bigger business sector is limited to a few farmers, mostly grain producers, who are open to cooperation. There is a plan to develop the local apiculture association. All villages are located in the Comrat area, which offers various economic and social advantages and opportunities.
There is also a national road connection nearby. LAG Steaua Bugeac’s purpose is to improve the living and business environment by carrying out economic, social and environmental development activities and programmes in the region. Its strategic objectives include sustainable development of local small- and medium-sized enterprises, the improvement of local infrastructure and public utilities and the increase of the territorial capacity to attract investment and civic activism.

LAG Dolina Rodnikov

Spring Valley

The LAG villages of Aluatu, Cairaclia, Copceac and Novosiolovca have a very clear common identity, symbolized by the fact that they all have springs. That is why they decided to name themselves ‘Spring Valley’. Local business focuses on agriculture and flowers (roses). The localities have a well-developed network of international partners in EU countries and in Turkey (14,328 inhabitants).

The top priority for all LAG members is local economic development and the creation of new jobs.

One of the initiatives is to develop the local production of traditional Gagauzian sausage (baur).

The mission identified by the LAG is to develop the economy of the villages by using traditional resources and attracting tourists through traditional local cuisine and local wine, growing and exporting organic crop and livestock breeding products, the promotion of healthy lifestyles and the maintenance and promotion of cultural diversity. The LAG’s vision is to become a centre for ethnic food and recreational tourism.

Gagauzian people are descendants of medieval Turkish nomadic tribes. Their traditional food consists mainly of meat dishes. Mihail, a resident of the village of Copceac, safekeeps the recipe and the manufacturing technology of baur.