

European LEADER Association for Rural Development – AISBL

Finnish Presidency January 2011 – December 2012

ELARD LAG's Staff Exchange Program - General instructions

The aim of the ELARD LAG's Staff Exchange is to offer European LAGs a possibility for reciprocal, international staff exchange in order to promote their formation and training as well as exchange of experiences, know-how and new ideas.

As a general rule, the staff members of the participating LAGs spend three weeks in another country getting to know the work done in the partner LAG. The exchange is reciprocal meaning that the same LAG both sends and receives a visitor. If the circumstances require, the exchange period can be made shorter with a mutual decision of the exchange partners. **Each LAG participating in the program can send only one member of their staff** to the exchange in order to avoid imbalances in the cost incurring to the exchange partners for hosting the visitors.

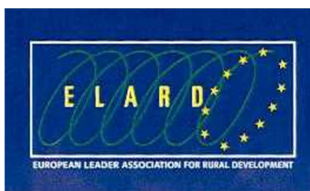
The objective of the exchange is, not only to offer the staff members a possibility to meet their colleagues in another EU country, but also to create more tangible results e.g. to carry out analysis of common challenges that the territories of the partner LAGs face and introducing the solutions both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

Before leaving for the Exchange

When your LAG has received an exchange partner proposal from ELARD please inform us on your decision whether or not you accept it as soon as possible. After this, you should wait for ELARD's confirmation with regard to the answer of your potential partner. If the both LAGs accept the proposal, the new partners should get in direct contact with each other in order to agree on the exact time of the exchanges. The reciprocal exchanges can, but do not necessarily have to happen simultaneously.

After both partners have approved the partner proposal, ELARD will send by email to one of the partners the **cooperation agreement** defining the time of the exchanges and the general responsibilities of the parties involved. This document should be printed in three copies and the copies should be sent with the signature of the LAG's chairman to the partner LAG to be signed (the address can be found in the partner proposal). Once the chairman of the partner LAG also signs the agreement, one copy should be sent back to the other LAG and another copy to ELARD (Rue Saint Laurent 36-38, 1000 Brussels, Belgium).

Before the starting date of the exchange, the host LAG should also provide their visitor information on the accommodation arrangements and a draft program for the exchange. The draft program does not need to be final, but it is recommendable to have a preliminary plan of how the three weeks of the exchange are going



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to be spent, which projects will be presented and which stakeholders will be met. As a basis for planning the draft program, you can find information on the interest of your future visitor from the partner proposal and, of course, by directly contacting your partner. Naturally, the exchange program can be modified during the exchange according to your mutual interests. **When you have finished the draft program, please send it by email both to your partner and to ELARD (elard@elard.eu).**

The LAG sending its staff member to the exchange takes care of the travel arrangements and covers the travel costs, insurances needed as well as the possible daily allowances of its employee. The host LAG organizes the accommodation and takes care of the possible accommodation costs. Family accommodation is recommended as it can lower the cost substantially. Please note that ELARD is not able to offer financial support for the exchange.

During the Exchange

The aim of the exchange is to offer the staff member of your partner LAG a possibility to get a profound picture of the work of your LAG and to learn about your ongoing projects. It is also desirable that the visitor is given a chance to get familiar with the region and its culture. In addition, your visitor should have a chance to meet and establish contacts with the your LAG's local, regional and national stakeholders (e.g. local population, entrepreneurs, authorities, schools as well as regional and national agencies etc.) depending on the interest of the visitor.

In order to enhance the learning process the participating staff member keeps a diary during the exchange (learning diary – see the instructions that will be sent to you). The diary is not only meant to record the daily activities but it should include the visitor's reflections about how the new information, knowledge or skills gained during the exchange can be used upon his return home.

After the Exchange

After returning home please send to ELARD (elard@elard.eu) your learning diary, the license to publish it on ELARD website and the evaluation form of the exchange that have been sent to you. Giving us an evaluation would be especially valuable as after the pilot phase of the exchange program we hope to be able to develop it further and make it a permanent activity of ELARD.

We wish you a very interesting and fruitful exchange!