



# **A Methodological Recommendation for the Action Plan Regarding the Renewal and Development of the Municipality**

Prepared within the project  
“Transfer of experience in rural renewal  
and development from V4 countries  
to Bosnia and Herzegovina”

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## 1 **INTRODUCTION**

### 1.1 Executive Summary

This document presents methodological recommendations for creating an action plan for the renewal and development of rural communities, with a particular focus on the area covered by LAG Savus in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska. The aim of the document is to provide a practical framework for the creation or renewal of a local action group (LAG) as a key tool for community-led local development (CLLD), which is used in European Union countries for targeted rural support.

The recommendations are based on examples of good practice in the Czech Republic and other EU countries, as well as on insights gained during a field visit to the Gradiška area. The document defines the role of LAGs at national and local level, proposes specific steps for their establishment or renewal, and provides guidance on strategy development, community involvement, project implementation and securing sustainable financing.

The main outcome is an action plan and a set of recommendations that can serve as a pilot model not only for the municipality of Gradiška, but also for other municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina seeking effective and inclusive rural development in the context of future EU membership.

### 1.2 Introduction & Purpose of the Document

This document is one of the outputs of the project entitled "Transfer of experience in rural renewal and development from V4 countries to Bosnia and Herzegovina", project ID 22430159. This output is intended both for representatives at the local level in the form of existing or future LAGs, and for representatives at the national level, namely the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management in their role as policy makers for the LAG environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### 1.3 Methodological Approach & Data Sources

The recommendations set out in this document were formulated on the basis of a combination of field findings, expert consultations and analysis of examples of good practice from the Czech Republic and other European countries. The aim was to create practical and transferable guidelines for the regeneration and development of rural communities through community-led local development (CLLD), in particular using the LEADER methodology.

An important basis for the recommendations was the information obtained during a field visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2025. During the visit, meetings were held with representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republika Srpska (BiH), representatives of the town of Gradiška and other local actors. These meetings provided direct insight into the current situation in the area and identified the needs and potential for the development of local action groups.

Furthermore, the findings and methodological materials of the National Network of LAGs of the Czech Republic, relevant ministries in the Czech Republic (Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of the Environment), professional publications, outputs of CLLD strategy evaluations in the Czech Republic and materials from European LEADER/CLLD networks ([ELARD](#), [EU CAP Network](#)) were used. The document also draws on open data sources and the experience of functioning LAGs in the Czech Republic and other countries.

## 2 **CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND**

### 2.1 Context of Rural Development in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Rural development policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina is set in accordance with the competences of the individual entities that make up Bosnia and Herzegovina. Institutions at the entity level, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republika Srpska (BiH), based in Banja Luka, play a key role in the field of rural development and agriculture.

During discussions with the project team, representatives of the ministry stated that they consider agriculture to be a strategic sector that will continue to play an important role in the future economic and social development of the region. They also pay special attention to young people living in rural areas, whose irreversible departure to cities or abroad poses a serious challenge to the sustainability of rural areas and local communities.

The Ministry also mentioned the very positive experience of its cooperation with the Czech Development Agency, through which it has received support and implemented a number of projects.

Discussions with ministry representatives also revealed a problematic situation concerning local action groups. In the past, approximately 14 LAGs were established in the Republika Srpska (BiH). However, most of them gradually ceased to exist, mainly due to a lack of stable funding and systemic support.

The absence of existing local action groups limits the ability of municipalities and local actors to actively plan and coordinate development measures directly in the territory and, assuming Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession to the European Union, also prolongs the time it takes to start distributing funds from the European Structural and Investment Funds through the integrated CLLD instrument, which is implemented exclusively by local action groups in the EU.

The Ministry therefore wants to prepare a set of standardisation conditions for future LAGs by 2026 and has declared its intention to support preparatory work aimed at building the capacity of these structures. The ambition is to create the conditions for the establishment of LAGs, particularly in less developed rural areas that do not have direct access to larger development instruments. Groups designed in this way could play a role in mobilising local resources, involving citizens and improving preparedness for both the use of international cooperation programmes and the future implementation of CLLD.

## 2.2 Why Local Action Groups Matter: Lessons from the Czech Republic

There are 180 local action groups in the Czech Republic, covering 90% of the country's territory with approximately 6.4 million rural inhabitants. Through the LEADER/CLLD approach, they have supported more than 22,000 local projects.



### 2.2.1 Multi-funded Financing

In the Czech Republic, Community-led Local Development is supported by several funds and programmes. While in the 2014–2020 programming period there were 3 funds (EAFRD, ERDF, ESF) and 4 programmes – Rural Development Programme (RDP), Integrated Regional Operational Programme (IROP), Operational Programme Environment (OP ENV) and Operational Programme Employment (OP EMPL), in the current 2021–2027 programming period there are already 4 funds (EAFRD, ERDF, ESF+, CF) and 6 programmes – Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Integrated Regional Operational Programme (IROP), Operational Programme Environment (OP ENV), Operational Programme Technologies and Application for Competitiveness (OP TAC), Operational Programme Employment+ (OP EMPL+) and Operational Programme Technical Assistance (OP TA).

CLLD allocation for project support in programmes involved (million EUR):

Operational programme	Programming period 2014–2020	Programming period 2021–2027
RDP/CAP	EUR 246 million	EUR 183 million
IROP	EUR 313 million	EUR 350 million
OP ENV	EUR 46 million	EUR 17 million
OP EMPL/OP EMPL+	EUR 84 million	EUR 70 million
OP TAC	/	EUR 41 million

### 2.2.2 Social cohesion and participation

Evaluations of LAGs and scientific articles (e.g. Local Action Groups as an Example of Participation and Development of Community: the Case of Moravian Way Local Action Group, <https://doi.org/10.16997/jdd.943>) show that, in addition to economic development, LAGs also have a significant impact on social cohesion, strengthening rural communities and citizen participation.

LAGs have contributed to improving services, creating jobs and diversifying the economy even in the smallest municipalities. Another important aspect is the promotion of participatory decision-making. LAGs actively involve citizens in planning the development of their own territory as part of the creation of Community-led Local Development Strategies, which are always drawn up in accordance with the EU programming period. The Czech LAG model is thus considered an effective tool that links spatial planning with local democracy and contributes to balanced regional development.

### 2.2.3 National Network of LAGs in the Czech Republic and regional LAG associations

Czech LAGs have gradually established themselves as partners at the national level. All LAGs are voluntarily associated in the National Network of Local Action Groups of the Czech Republic (NN LAG CZ), which currently represents more than 178 LAGs out of a total of 180 LAGs in the Czech Republic. Thanks to its systematic representation and professional activities, LAGs are recognised as legitimate partners of the state administration, especially in the field of regional and rural policy. The Ministry of Regional Development regularly consults with NN LAG CZ on proposals for subsidy programmes and strategic documents, and representatives of the network also participate in negotiations on the setting of the EU funds programming period 2028+. This approach shows that LAGs in the Czech Republic have moved from being recipients of subsidies to active policy co-creators who bring the voice of rural areas directly to the negotiating tables of state administration.

It is essential to note that this system was created entirely from the bottom up. The National Network of Local Action Groups of the Czech Republic is a self-governing association with the legal status of a non-governmental non-profit organisation. Each region has a regional LAG association, which sends its representatives to the LAG National Committee. This committee is the main decision-making body, in which each region has one representative and which elects a chairperson from among its members. This structure ensures that the management of the LAG network comes directly from the field and represents the real needs of individual territories, rather than the interests of the state or central administration. Thanks to this autonomy, LAGs in the Czech Republic maintain the trust of their member organisations and partners and can act as a respected player in public life.

### 2.2.4 Cooperation with ministries

Czech LAGs have also proven themselves as a multi-sector platform that can respond flexibly to current social challenges and act as a partner for the state administration.

In the field of education, they have been implementing Local Action Plans for Education Development (MAP) since 2015, in cooperation with municipalities and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. LAGs thus involve schools, parents, non-profit organisations and municipalities in joint planning for the development of pre-school and primary education. Within these projects, LAGs can use funds to cover part of the wage costs of LAG office staff. In the field of education, LAGs also acted as advisors to schools in the LAG area in the process of preparing and applying for grants from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, which distributed funds from the European Social Fund.

Similarly, in the field of energy, they cooperate with the Ministry of the Environment on the implementation of the New Green Savings Light programme. LAGs provide advice to senior citizens in municipalities, ensure that applications are completed and often visit them directly in their homes. The Ministry of the Environment then pays LAGs a financial reward for each successfully administered application, which enables LAGs to finance further operating expenses. In the field of energy, the capacities of LAGs were also supported by the Ministry of Industry and Trade, which created a special subsidy title for LAGs. This made it possible to cover the salary costs of an energy coordinator at the LAGs, whose main task was to provide advice on energy savings and renewable sources to municipalities, entrepreneurs, non-profit organisations and citizens in the LAG territory.

### 2.2.5 Cooperation with regions

At the regional level, LAGs cooperate with regional authorities. Many of them provided financial support to LAGs to supplement the operation of LAGs that was not covered by EU funds. Without them, it would have been very difficult for LAGs to distribute funds through CLLD.

Another example of cooperation at the regional level is the Ústí Region, which signed a memorandum with the regional LAG association in 2022. Under this agreement, LAGs provided advice to municipalities and other entities on drawing regional subsidies ( ) and jointly implemented activities to support community life. LAGs announced special subsidy calls for their territories, administered applications, and the region ultimately reimbursed the costs of community events held in the territory.

LAGs in the Czech Republic act as multifunctional partners for the state, regions and local communities, and their network is used across ministries to provide support down to the level of the smallest municipalities.

### **3 PILOT AREA ANALYSIS**

#### **3.1 Pilot Territory Overview: LAG SAVUS and Municipality of Gradiška**

##### LAG SAVUS:

The association "Lokalna akciona grupa Savus" (LAG Savus) was founded in 2012 to support rural and regional development (strategy, new knowledge). The area in which LAG Savus operates includes the town of Gradiška and the municipalities of Srbac, Kozarska Dubica and Laktaši. At the end of 2023, a cooperation agreement was signed with the Rural Development Network of BiH, which renews the activities of LAG Savus within the SEDRA II project (GIZ). In January 2024, a new Local Development Strategy (2024–2027) was planned. LAG Savus therefore has the support of all local authorities and civil society organisations and is preparing to draw on grant resources for the development of agriculture and other rural activities.

##### Municipality of Gradiška:

The town of Gradiška (formerly Bosanska Gradiška) is located in the Lijevočje area, on the right bank of the Sava River, on the border with Croatia, about 40 km north of Banja Luka. The town of Gradiška has a population of approximately 45,000. Gradiška is an important agricultural centre. A significant part of the area consists of orchards and farmland. For example, local fruit growers cultivate 1,800 hectares of orchards, of which 1,200 hectares are apple orchards (representing 60% of apple production in the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina). In recent years, the city has attracted significant foreign investment and subsidies. Between 2020 and 2025, it received approximately 70 million convertible marks in grants from various European funds. Part of the funds was used, for example, to equip the Nova Topola development zone and renovate infrastructure (water mains, roads). Gradiška also cooperates with the Czech Republic. The Czech Republic supported a project to expand the water supply network in the local areas of Gašnica and Rahova (for almost CZK 21 million from Czech Development Agency funds), thereby improving the supply of drinking water in remote areas.

#### **3.2 Needs Assessment & Key Challenges Identified**

Problems identified during field visits:

- Technological and infrastructural backwardness: Local farmers pointed to the lack of modern agricultural technologies and supporting infrastructure.
- Financial security: Municipalities are troubled by a lack of their own resources for developing and maintaining agricultural production. A key problem is the need to draw on grant funds. Representatives of LAG Savus therefore emphasise the need to use European pre-accession funds and international programmes. The town itself admits that without systematic work on grant projects, it would not be possible to make many investments.
- Other socio-economic challenges: The region also faces problems related to the outflow of young people and the need to diversify the local economy. Support for the bottom-up

principle (LEADER) is thus seen as a way to coordinate local actors and better target projects to the specific needs of communities (see the preparation of the LAG Savus strategy).

Assessment of the needs of the municipality and the area:

The analysis shows that the most pressing needs are infrastructure projects and further investment in agricultural production. Improving water supply is one of the main priorities. In addition to the aforementioned ČRA project to extend the water supply system in Gašnice and Orahovo (CZK 21 million), other projects are also being prepared (e.g. modifications to local water sources). Irrigation of agricultural land is another key issue: a project to build an irrigation system worth approximately CZK 10 million has been launched in the Lijevoče region. There is also a need to invest in transport infrastructure for farmers. Recently, 200 km of new or reconstructed local roads have been built to give farmers better access to markets. Overall, municipalities and the region expect support for these development activities mainly from European sources and international grants (e.g. through the Interreg, Danube Strategy and Erasmus+ programmes), which is in line with the principles of LEADER and the bottom-up approach.

State of readiness for establishing or renewing a LAG:

There are currently only two registered LAG-type entities in the Republika Srpska (BiH):

- LAG Savus,
- LAG Devetak.

However, LAG Savus has recently resumed its activities. In December 2023, a partnership agreement was signed between municipalities and civil society to resume the activities of LAG Savus in the region. In January 2024, the first working workshop was convened with the aim of developing a new Local Development Strategy for the period 2024–2027. This establishes a framework for bottom-up project planning in the region, with local actors jointly determining development priorities. The above activities show that the municipality of Gradiška and the surrounding communities are ready to participate in the restart of the LAG, as there is political will and steps have been taken (strategy, participatory process) towards its establishment.

## 4 **METHODOLOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

### 4.1 Recommendation Part A – National Level (State/Ministries)

In order for local action groups to become a functional and beneficial tool for rural development in the Republika Srpska (BiH), institutional support from state and regional authorities is essential. Experience from other countries that have gone through a period prior to EU accession shows that the state can take a number of specific steps to create a stable basis for community-led local development.

#### 4.1.1 Involvement of LAGs as local implementers of public support

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republika Srpska (BiH), as well as other ministries, can formally recognise LAGs as territorial partners for the implementation of selected national or entity subsidy programmes. This may mean that the state entrusts LAGs with the following roles, for example:

- receiving and pre-selecting applications for support from the territory,
- assisting municipalities, associations and entrepreneurs with the preparation of applications,
- organising calls for small grants according to local priorities,
- providing advice and support activities.

This model has proven successful in the Czech Republic, for example, where LAGs act as intermediaries between the state administration and rural areas. This provides the state with a network of trustworthy and accessible partners who are familiar with local needs.

#### 4.1.2 Creation of a strategic and legal framework for the functioning of LAGs

For the stable functioning of LAGs, it is advisable for the state to begin preparing:

- basic standards for the recognition of LAGs in accordance with the principles of EU LEADER/CLLD (territorial delimitation of LAGs, LAGs operating only in rural areas, balance of sectoral representation, bottom-up participation),
- methodology for monitoring and coordinating LAG activities.

This framework will provide clear rules for the establishment and operation of LAGs and at the same time prepare the system for future acceptance of European funding.

#### 4.1.3 Technical and financial support for capacity building prior to EU accession

The state may establish pilot subsidy programmes or allocate budgetary resources specifically for:

- defining the area of operation and setting up partnerships,
- preparing analyses of the territory and its needs,
- preparing a simplified strategy (known as a 'small SCLLD') in accordance with European principles,
- covering the basic operating costs of the LAG (e.g. coordinator's salary, rental of premises).

These activities can be financed from national rural development programmes or in cooperation with international donors under Erasmus+ programmes or, possibly, the Czech Development Agency.

#### 4.1.4 Linking LAGs with regional development and sectoral priorities

Regional authorities (e.g. regions, cantons, districts) should be encouraged to cooperate with newly established LAGs, for example through:

- concluding service provision contracts (e.g. consulting for municipalities),
- aligning regional strategies with the LAG's area of operation,
- using LAGs as communication and implementation partners for public priorities in areas such as education, energy, employment or social inclusion.

In return for this cooperation, public institutions can offer LAGs both financial and non-financial support in the form of premises for their operations and training, thereby recognising the added value of LAGs in involving citizens and implementing public policies in practice.

## 4.2 Recommendation Part B – Local Level (LAG SAVUS + Municipality)

### **Step 1 – Initial assessment and data collection**

The LAG will begin preparing the strategic plan with a detailed analysis of the territory. It will collect statistical and economic data on demographics, business, agriculture, infrastructure and other developments in the region, and map existing services and projects. In practice, this means using available statistics and local surveys (e.g. questionnaires, interviews) to ensure that the background study reflects the current situation in the municipalities. Such a "map of the territory" will identify long-term trends (e.g. ageing population, migration, unemployment) and areas with weak infrastructure or services. This data is then combined with local knowledge of the terrain. The LAG analytical team can use its own research or collaborate with experts to prepare a document describing the strengths and weaknesses of the territory and opportunities for development.

### **Step 2 – Community involvement**

The success of the strategy depends on the active involvement of as wide a range of local actors as possible and on the principle of participation. The LAG should systematically reach out to municipalities (mayors and authorities), entrepreneurs, non-profit organisations and citizens (e.g. through public meetings, information campaigns and working groups). It is essential to build personal relationships with partners. It is recommended to communicate with them regularly, identify their needs and motivations, and allow them to co-decide on the content of the strategy. In practical terms, this could take the form of round tables, community forums or workshops where people can learn about the preparation of the strategy and express their ideas and concerns. Community involvement not only provides valuable input (community knowledge), but also gives the plan greater legitimacy when people feel that the plan was created 'with them'.

### **Step 3 – Identification of key development needs**

Based on the collected data and community discussions, the LAG will identify the main problem areas and areas for development in the territory. This usually takes place in special working groups or at public hearings, where participants jointly prioritise individual needs (e.g. improving transport accessibility, supporting small businesses, developing tourist infrastructure, caring for the elderly, etc.). It is important that localised needs are not based solely on unsubstantiated opinions. It is recommended to combine community discussions with verification using facts and data. For example, if locals identify increasing employment as a priority, the LAG can verify this claim by comparing unemployment statistics and sectors. This will ensure that the strategy responds to real needs (supported, for example, by a SWOT analysis) and that we avoid assumptions or local myths.

### **Step 4 – Setting objectives**

Specific territorial development objectives are derived from the identified needs. The objectives should be formulated clearly and measurably (e.g. "increase the number of new jobs in small businesses in rural areas by 20% by 2027"). They are set on the basis of SWOT analysis or other methodological frameworks adopted by the LAG. The work is carried out both internally within the LAG and, again, with the community. Working groups can be set up to prepare proposals for objectives and related strategic measures based on the data. It is advisable to build on previous strategic documents (if they exist) and maintain continuity where problems persist. Each objective should correspond to one or more areas identified as critical (e.g. economy, social services, environment) and be based on a shared vision for the future of the area.

### **Step 5 – Designing Actions**

Specific measures and projects (known as SCLLD measures) will be prepared for each objective. These may include small projects at the municipal level (infrastructure reconstruction, new social or educational services) as well as larger cooperation projects (e.g. joint markets, tourist routes). When designing actions, the LAG can draw on the experience of other LAGs and proven approaches. Actions should be innovative, integrated and balanced across sectors, taking into account funding sources.

Having a "vision" is key here. It is recommended that the LAG have people on its team or board who are knowledgeable about regional development and have good ideas for solving problems. For example, it can set up working groups focused on individual sectors (business, environment, education, etc.), and each group will prepare a proposal for actions in its area. For larger measures, it is also good to involve municipalities or other entities in co-financing or partnerships so that the action has realistic funding ( ).

### Step 6 – Implementation structure

When implementing the strategy, it must be clear who is responsible for what. It is recommended to define a management structure, for example, to establish a LAG coordination council or working groups to monitor the implementation of individual objectives. The strategy should clearly describe the role of the LAG (and its members) that the LAG has decided to fulfil. It is not just a plan for the development of the area, but a plan for how the LAG itself will contribute to its implementation. Each measure or project should have a designated guarantor (e.g. the municipality responsible for the investment, the LAG as facilitator, a local organisation or entrepreneur as implementer). The LAG should also clarify the methods of communication and coordination with municipalities (e.g. through meetings, data collection, monitoring committees). It is good practice to maintain stable thematic working groups for individual priorities, which meet regularly and coordinate individual actions. This ensures continuity and the sharing of experience across the implementation of the strategy.

### Step 7 – Monitoring and evaluation

Finally, it is necessary to set up a mechanism for monitoring progress and evaluating the strategy. The LAG should regularly (e.g. annually) check what has been achieved from the planned activities and why, and conversely what has remained unfinished. The results of this evaluation are consistently used in strategy updates. They can reveal, for example, inaccurately set deadlines, insufficient resources or changes in community needs. It is recommended to prepare a simple system of indicators (number of projects, number of entrepreneurs supported, number of new jobs, etc.) and keep records of them. Each year, based on the experience gained, the action plan or operational activities of the LAG can be adjusted (e.g. changing priorities, reallocating funds, issuing new calls for proposals). Such flexible evaluation will help to keep the strategy up to date and ensure that it contributes to the development of the area.

## 5 ACTION PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION

### 5.1 Action Plan for Renewal and Development of the Municipality

The renewal and development of rural communities is based on partnership and cooperation between local actors within the framework of community-led development. The Local Action Group (LAG) is a platform for the public, non-profit and private sectors to formulate and implement the municipality's development strategy. LAGs help to draw on EU and national programme funding (LEADER/CLLD method) and involve farmers, entrepreneurs, non-profit organisations and municipalities in development. An example is the Czech CLLD model, where a "*combination of multiple EU funds*" makes it possible to support a wider range of activities in the local strategy. The community renewal plan therefore includes specific steps for capacity building, addressing infrastructure and entrepreneurship, and defining indicators of success.

#### 1. Specific steps

Establishment or revitalisation of LAGs, including approval of statutes and registration; involvement of key local actors (representatives of farmers, NGOs, entrepreneurs and municipalities) in working groups; community work on the Local Development Strategy of the municipality; preparation and implementation of pilot projects (e.g. renovation of roads, cycle paths, renewable energy sources, support for local entrepreneurs and NGOs). Systemically, this involves the introduction of a bottom-up approach (LEADER), i.e. working in community partnerships to develop and evaluate the strategy.

2. Responsible persons  
Mayor and councillors (ensuring political support and budget); LAG coordinator/manager (strategy preparation, project management); representatives of the agricultural sector and local businesses (technical cooperation); non-profit organisations (coordination of community activities); communication coordinator (promotion of plans and public involvement). Regional support organisations (e.g. national or regional LAG networks) also play an important role by providing advice and training.
3. Timetable 2026–2028
  - 2026: formal establishment of the LAG, public consultations, definition of the territory and preparation of the first version of the Local Strategy.
  - 2027: approval of the strategy, preparation of project plans, launch of investment and non-investment projects (grant applications, e.g. IPARD, Erasmus, etc.).
  - 2028: completion of the first projects, impact assessment, adjustment of the action plan and ensuring sustainability (e.g. budget revision, involvement of new partners, preparation of further calls).
4. Success indicators  
Number and volume of grants obtained; number of projects implemented (e.g. new infrastructure, support for entrepreneurs, planting of tree lines); level of community involvement (number of LAG members, participation in meetings and events); improvement in quality of life (new services, job opportunities); transparency and efficiency of resource use (evaluation of the LAG budget, number of planned activities implemented).

## 5.2 Roadmap for Establishing or Re-establishing a LAG (LAG SAVUS as Pilot)

A Local Action Group (LAG) can be established as an independent community of representatives from the public, business and civil sectors, working according to the LEADER principles for rural development. The legal form and organisational structure must be adapted to local conditions, e.g. by registering as an association or other association in accordance with applicable legislation. In the SAVUS pilot area (Srbač, Gradiška, Laktaši, Kozarska Dubica), the first steps were already taken in 2024: with the support of the National Rural Development Network, the development of a Local Development Strategy using the LEADER bottom-up method (organising meetings and workshops with local actors) was launched. The next steps in the plan are:

1. Legal and organisational foundations  
Draw up the LAG's statutes, set goals and principles (based on LEADER). Register the LAG (e.g. with the ministry/foreign development agency) as a legal entity (in the Czech Republic, this is usually an association); establish bodies such as a committee, a supervisory commission, and a manager (implementation officer). Consideration should also be given to LAG certification (in the Czech Republic) or similar accreditation enabling the use of funds. The definition of the area of operation (list of municipalities) should be consistent and without conflicting overlaps.
2. Membership structure  
Adhere to the principle of public-private-non-profit partnership (similar to the Czech Republic, with a maximum 49% share for the public sector). Representatives of municipalities, agricultural entrepreneurs, local businesses and non-profit organisations should be involved in the LAG. It is recommended to create working groups for specific areas of the strategy (e.g. agriculture, infrastructure, civic activities). To ensure the stability of the LAG, establish a regular membership base and transparent criteria for the admission of new partners.
3. Organisational steps  
Hold a constituent meeting to establish the LAG (statutes and election of leadership). Immediately afterwards, begin the standardisation process (obtaining accreditation in accordance with the local Ministry of Agriculture). Divide the agenda into committees (LAG office, executive committee, selection committee) and define decision-making processes.

Create a work schedule for the strategy (e.g. meetings in municipalities, data collection). In line with the recommendations of foreign studies, the development of the Strategy should be accompanied by increased infrastructure support. For example, in RS (BiH), LAGs were not previously supported by the state, and this needs to be changed.

4. Capacity building plan

Implement training and professional seminars on the LEADER/CLLD method, project writing, and LAG management. Involve external consultants and experienced lecturers (e.g. from NN LAG CZ or international networks). Exchange experiences with already functioning LAGs, study visits. Gradually build human resources and financially secure the position of LAG manager. Support education in community development projects. According to studies, ongoing capacity building is key: *"organise training for local actors to familiarise them with the principles of LEADER/LAGs, and continue to build capacity and share practices with the EU as much as possible"*.

5. Communication plan

Define strategies for informing the public and stakeholders: LAG website, social networks, press releases, local media. Regularly communicate actions and outputs (newsletter, municipal newsletters, meetings with residents). Establish dialogue with authorities (region, government) and interest groups to gain support. It is key to motivate representatives of all sectors to get involved. This will strengthen *the entire "triad of partners" (public, private, civic) in the LAG*.

6. Recommended internal documents and processes

Develop a set of documents governing the activities of the LAG: statutes, rules of procedure for committees, rules for accepting members. Establish a transparent project selection process (criteria and evaluation framework). Develop a budget and internal financial rules. Ensure control and evaluation mechanisms (annual report, audit). We recommend standardising selection procedures, working with external evaluations and involving members in strategy monitoring.

### 5.3 Funding Opportunities in International Cooperation

- Erasmus+ small-scale partnership

International cooperation projects, suitable for organisations of all sizes, with the advantage of simpler administration. Projects last 6–24 months and involve at least two partners from different EU countries or associated countries (applicant and partner). They offer lower administrative requirements and support the exchange of experience, strengthening of competences (e.g. for LAG managers on the topic of establishing and operating LAGs) and the international dimension of local activities.

- V4 funds

Supports multilateral (at least 3 V4 countries) and cross-border (2 neighbouring V4 countries) cooperation projects. The emphasis is on joint activities between NGOs, public institutions, municipalities and universities. Grants can cover 100% of the budget (with a 15% overhead component) and usually amount to EUR 25,000–35,000 per project. The maximum duration is 18 months. The themes of Visegrad grants include regional development, culture, education and innovation, i.e. potentially also rural projects or joint LAG strategies across the V4.

- The Czech Development Agency

finances bilateral projects in priority developing countries, focusing on sustainable development, agriculture, social infrastructure and environmental protection. The projects are implemented in cooperation with local partners (state institutions, NGOs and universities) and focus on long-term community development. For our purposes, we can use ČRA grant calls or joint projects with Czech organisations operating in the region.

- Potential partners in the EU

It is important to establish contacts with LAGs, networks and institutions in the EU. For example, the National Network of LAGs in the Czech Republic and European organisations

such as [ELARD](#) and [the EU CAP Network](#) provide a strong database, know-how and opportunities for international cooperation. International projects can also be found within the Interreg, Horizon and LIFE programmes, which support innovation and cooperation. Furthermore, it is possible to cooperate with universities (joint research projects) and other entities active in the field of rural development. Involvement in the European LEADER/CLLD networks provides inspiration and access to further support.

- The ENRD also maintains a database of all LAGs, where filters can be used to find a suitable project partner: [https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/networking/leader/lag-directory/search\\_en](https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/networking/leader/lag-directory/search_en). LAGs in the Czech Republic can be found, for example, in the database of member LAGs, managed by the National Network of LAGs in the Czech Republic: Overview of member LAGs in the National Network of LAGs in the Czech Republic: <https://www.nsmascr.cz/o-nas/clenove-ns-mas/>.

## 6 CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Conclusions

This methodological recommendation was created as a practical tool for municipalities and local actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly in the Republika Srpska (BiH), who are striving for the systematic development of rural areas through community-led local development (CLLD). The main message of the document is clear: without the existence of functional local action groups (LAGs), it will not be possible in the future to make effective use of European Union funds earmarked for integrated rural development, particularly through the LEADER instrument.

An analysis of the current situation in the Gradiška area and the activities of the renewed LAG Savus has shown that interest, motivation and political will exist at the local level. Municipalities, entrepreneurs and non-profit organisations understand that the bottom-up approach allows them to define their own development priorities and gain direct access to resources. However, the key prerequisite remains the creation of a high-quality partnership, the establishment of a legally anchored LAG, the definition of the territory and the joint creation of a strategy.

Experience from the Czech Republic and other EU Member States and accession countries clearly confirms that supporting the creation and development of LAGs brings more than just access to finance. LAGs become partners of the state administration, regions and local governments and help not only with the distribution of support, but also with increasing participation, citizen trust and the quality of decision-making at the local level.

This document offers a specific step-by-step methodology, from the initial analysis of the territory, through community involvement, to the design of the implementation structure, monitoring and financing. It thus creates a guiding framework for the renewal of LAGs in the LAG Savus territory, which can also be transferred to other regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

For the successful implementation of the recommendations, it will be essential that:

- the state (in particular the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republika Srpska, BiH) creates the legal and financial conditions for LAGs (including accreditation, basic funding and recognition as a partner)
- municipalities and local actors take an active role in establishing LAGs and developing strategies,
- available international cooperation tools (e.g. Erasmus+, ČRA, Visegrad Fund) are used to develop capacities and share good practices,
- a network of LAGs was created in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which will serve as a platform for sharing experiences, unified representation and coordination.

This methodology is not the final goal, but a starting point. It represents the beginning of a journey that could lead to a strong, independent and development-oriented countryside, ready for Bosnia and Herzegovina's future membership in the European Union.

### 6.2 Annexes

1. Translated Chapter 8.1 "Monitoring compliance with LAG standards in the 2021-2027 programming period" from the document Methodological guidelines for the use of integrated tools and regional action plans in the 2021-2027 programming period
2. Translated chapter 8.3 "Structure of the Community-led Local Development (CLLD) Strategy for the 2021-2027 programming period" from the document Methodological guidelines for the use of integrated tools and regional action plans in the 2021-2027 programming period  
Source: <https://dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/kohezni-politika-po-roce-2020/metodicke-dokumenty/metodicke-dokumenty-v-gesci-mmr-cr/metodicky-pokyn-pro-vyuziti-integrovaných-nastrojů>

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