

## LEADER/CLLD advocacy and Europe closer to citizens

1. LEADER is valued, and active, well beyond the EU
  - We should be proud of this
  - Candidate, associate & neighbourhood countries must be in the debate
  - Delays in accession processes are unfair and dangerous.
2. LEADER process is of interest to, and supported by, bodies other than ELARD & LEADER family e.g. UNDP, AEIDL, ERP, Rural Networks
3. LEADER in rural and fisheries areas has parallels in other areas through URBACT, ITI, Regional Parks, Geoparks etc. They can be valuable allies in advocacy and in exchanges of good practice etc.
4. LAGs can draw down funds from other sources than EAFRD. Ideally, we need true local development agencies, durable, versatile, integrated, pursuing local strategy with multiple sources of funding.

# Europe closer to citizens

5. LAGs/Local development agencies can be a means to connect/reconnect citizens to the European mission, the EU and their own governments.

6. That connection should reflect the different character of each place and of the community that is based there.

7. But this connecting will only happen if :

- that role for LEADER is recognised
- the LAGs have the trust of governments; the freedom to act; the capacity to innovate and take risks; the resources to make face-to-face contact with people; the sensitivity to relate to all the different parts of their populations: the active involvement of youth.

# Changes needed

8. We need to strengthen the understanding of LEADER principles within governments, public, private and civil organisations and the populace ... and to raise the awareness of the potential of LEADER and CLLD.
9. We need urgent and persistent advocacy for LEADER/CLLD, recognising the intense competition for public funds. We must fight for LEADER funding, and press governments to be open to bids from LAGs for funds from all relevant programmes.
10. More radically, we might pursue an updated version of the original Community Initiative, with :
  - a European Fund, administered direct by the Commission, to support capacity building and innovation by the LEADER family
  - A strong LEADER Hub at EU level
  - LEADER ERASMUS to promote exchange in the LEADER family