

COMPRENDRE



COMPARATIVE VIEWS OF EUROPEAN FUNDS AND THE FRENCH RURAL AGENDA

Summary



This publication presents the main results of the "Comparative Views of European Funds and the French Rural Agenda" study. This work, based on data from the Observatoire du Développement Rural (ODR-Inrae), the ASP (Agence de Service et de Paiement) and the Europe Department of the ANCT, aims to highlight the share of European funds, and in particular the EAFRD, in the financing of rural development policies in France. This study also aims to identify not only the quantitative weight of the contribution of European funds, including the EAFRD, but also the impact of these funds in qualitative terms.

This study was commissioned by the ANCT and funded by the National Rural Network. It was conducted in 2023 by Leader France, selected after a call for tenders and procurement contract.

The entire study was coordinated by Patricia Andriot (ANCT) and Marie Laurent (ANCT).

This study was co-funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The support provided by the European Commission for this report does not in any way constitute an endorsement of its content, which reflects only the authors' point of view; the Commission may not be held liable for any use of the information contained herein.

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The European Structural Funds are important for regional cohesion in France. The National Agency for Territorial Cohesion coordinates ERDF and ESF funding, and also works with the EAFRD (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) as co-director of the National Rural Network alongside the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty and the Regions of France. In addition, since 2017, the French government has developed a proactive policy for rural areas with a rural agenda, followed by a new programme launched in 2023: Rural France.

Understanding how these funds interact and the roles that they play, particularly that of the EAFRD, in national rural development issues, and observing other countries' practices in policies for rural and mountainous areas are therefore, naturally, some of our primary concerns.

With the help of the National Rural Network, the agency has therefore decided to conduct research in order to:

- assess and demonstrate how European funds contribute to rural and mountainous areas. In particular, we seek to highlight the EAFRD's support of measures that contribute to advancing the Rural Agenda,
- identify how French and European public policies address issues relating to development in rural and mountainous areas.

The results of these studies are published in three reports¹ and confirm the structuring, and in some cases determining, nature of European funds in France, as well as in the other countries studied, in terms of rural development.

Beyond the different histories and trajectories of each of the countries studied, this research highlights common issues: a widely observed feeling that rural areas have been neglected, public policies that are being developed to support rural and mountainous areas as they face climate change, a shared resurgence of initiatives that begin in these regions, as well as the role of engineering.

These 3 reports on how the EAFRD is used to facilitate rural development and what kind of support is provided for adapting to climate change in the countries studied all highlight the key role of engineering in meeting these new challenges. These studies confirm how important the agency, its programmes and adaptive engineering are, as well as the role of engineering in better use of European funds.

Stanislas Bourron
Director general of
the national agency for territorial cohesion

Notes

¹This report, *Comparative Views of European Funds and the French Rural Agenda*, as well as *Rural Areas and Rural Policy in Europe* and *Climate Change in the Mountains: Meeting the Challenges of Adapting to Climate Change in Water and Tourism Management* (available on the ANCT website <https://agence-cohesion-territoires.gouv.fr/>)



FUNDS AND THE FRENCH RURAL AGENDA

Today, it is impossible to broach the subject of rural development in France without bringing up rural development in Europe. Depending on the studies and the criteria used, between one quarter and one half of Europe's population lives in rural areas, representing between one half and three quarters of the territory of the European Union. Rural areas, in all their diversity, are home to 22 million French people and make up over 88% of the territory. Rural areas are at the centre of the transitions that are affecting France and Europe: demographic, ecological, energy, agricultural, digital, economic and social.

Since the creation of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), rural development policy in France and in Europe has rested on a number of closely-linked strategic frameworks and programmes that aim to support rural areas, promote sustainability, boost the local economy and improve quality of life for residents.

This study, commissioned by the Agence Nationale de la Cohésion des Territoires and partially funded by the French Réseau Rural via EAFRD commitments, should make it possible to measure how these two European and French dynamics work together and complement each other. Numerous studies highlight the fact that rural development policy in France depends heavily on European programmes and commitments, but without drawing up a precise report. The aim is therefore to measure quantitatively and qualitatively the contribution of the CAP financial instruments and the cohesion policy to regional and national rural development policies in France.

SCOPE AND SOURCE OF DATA

The study uses the following available quantitative and qualitative data:

First, quantitative data was collected from Unité de Service de l'Observatoire du Développement Rural (US-ODR, INRAE), Agence de Services et de Paiement (ASP), various regional councils, the Direction générale des Collectivités Locales (DGCL), the European Commission via its open data platform, Cohesiondata, and the Europe division of the Agence Nationale de la Cohésion des Territoires. By compiling and analysing this digital data, a factual analysis of the situation can be put forward. This data was completed by two surveys conducted by Leader France, one on Local Action Groups, the other on management authorities.

The study focuses on certain subjects addressed by the EAFRD, defined by specifications and selected as representative of rural development in Europe: digital technology, mobility, youth, public accessibility of services, access to care/assistance for the ageing population and small businesses in rural areas. The key measures of the French rural agenda relating to these subjects have been identified, together with the corresponding EAFRD measures, namely:

- Measure 2 (Advisory services, farm management and relief services),
- Measure 3 (Quality schemes for agriproducts and foodstuffs),
- Measure 7 (Basic services and village renewal in rural areas)
- Measure 16 (Cooperation)
- Measure 19 (Support for LEADER local development (CLLD))

KEY FIGURES FROM THE STUDY

THE USE OF EUROPEAN FUNDS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT: A MARKER OF RURAL PRIORITIES



Three surveys conducted
Among management authorities
and Local Action Groups

30 interviews carried out
With management authorities
and other qualified persons



Two European
programming
periods studied

2014 – 2022 / 2023 - 2027



4 main data sources

ASP data, US-ODR processing,
INRAE
DGCL
COHESIONDATA
Surveys



5 EAFRD measures studied



73 measures of the French
rural agenda studied



20,545 projects approved
under measure 19



29,563 projects approved
under the measures studied



€917,346,626: EAFRD
amount committed to rural
development in 2014-2021



€1,118,533,654: ERDF
amount committed to rural
development in 2014-2021



€ 1 billion:
Annual provision of equipment
for rural areas (DETR)



EUROPEAN FUNDS: A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO FUNDING RURAL AREAS

THE EAFRD: MAIN SOURCE OF EUROPEAN FUNDING FOR RURAL AREAS

Like all other European structural funds, the principle of "additionality", which means that contributions from structural funds do not replace the structural expenditure of Member States, raises the question of how they tie in with other tools for funding local public policies, first and foremost with State-region planning contracts, of which the purpose and implementation methods are similar to those of operational programmes.

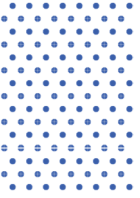
For the 2014-2022 programming period, the data analysed within the framework of our study shows that nearly €1.1 billion in EAFRD funding and €917 million in ERDF funding will be used to finance projects in rural areas that fall within the scope of rural development. The contribution of the EAFRD to rural development is therefore the main European financial instrument used by rural areas.

Initial analyses of French data on EAFRD measures taken under the second pillar of the CAP confirm that Member States, and also the regions, have the possibility of adapting Community support to their rural development priorities.

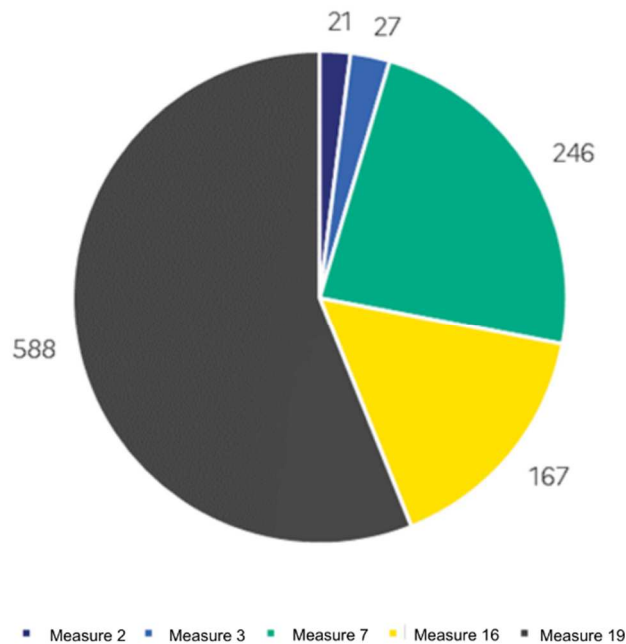
The breakdown of the EAFRD financial model demonstrates the importance of agricultural measures within the EAFRD and the lack of consideration given to rural development in view of the challenges faced by rural areas. Thus, four so-called agricultural measures represent around 70% of EAFRD expenditure. Remember that in France, the EAFRD is implemented regionally by rural development programmes which define a strategy and implementation objectives through joint measures. Each programme is managed by a "management authority". The regional councils establish and manage 27 regional rural development programmes (RRDP). Two regions are exceptions to this: Réunion Island and Mayotte, where RRDPs are respectively managed by the departmental council and the Prefecture.

With regard to the measures studied in this study, despite the regional breakdown, the January 2023 EAFRD model study highlights a focus of funds on 3 measures: measure 7 on basic services and village renewal in rural areas, measure 16 on cooperation and measure 19 on support for local development under Leader (DLAL).

For the measures examined in this study, these three measures account for 97% of funding, i.e. 1.724 billion euros out of a total of 1.793 billion euros, and are available in all regions.



Breakdown of the 2014-2022 EAFRD budget committed by measure at the end of programming period in France (in € million)



Source: ASP data, US-ODR processing, Inrae, January 2023

Measure 19 on support for local development under LEADER at the centre of EAFRD support for rural development

The LEADER measure is the only EAFRD measure subject to specific governance and has been developed in nearly 338 territories in France, i.e. nearly 28,000 municipalities. Developed on a territorial basis and within the framework of a public-private partnership set up as a Local Action Group (LAG), the approach is designed to support multi-sectoral strategies, developed and managed by the territories.

Despite representing just 5% of the total EAFRD budget in France for the 2014-2022 programming period, i.e. nearly €850 million of EAFRD funding (including additional commitments for the 2021-2022 transition period), Measure 19, known as "LEADER", represents 70% of the projects approved and studied under all the measures in this study, i.e. over 20,000 projects financed in the whole of France.

Through the multi-sectoral vision, engineering support, local development led by local stakeholders and numerous principles, the LEADER measure, which is part of the EAFRD, is in line with the rural agenda and is helping to change the perception of rural areas, which are now seen as solutions to the major changes taking place around us.



TAKING RURAL DEVELOPMENT INTO ACCOUNT IN THE ERDF

Reduced visibility of the impact of the ERDF during the 2014-2020 programming period

For the 2014-2022 programming period, no funding was specifically earmarked for rural development, unlike urban development, in the national rural development plan. However, according to a survey conducted among regional councils, 55.6% of them emphasise the contribution of the ERDF to rural development through a number of schemes which have contributed to this development by way of "sectoral" interventions. It is estimated that €917 million of ERDF funding was allocated to rural development out of the total €8.4 billion, supplemented by €2.6 billion as part of the "React-EU" relaunch.

Due to the lack of earmarking and data, it is not possible to precisely measure how many projects linked to rural development themes have been supported in the 2014-2022 programming period, and this contributes to reinforcing the feeling of inaccessibility of this fund for rural areas.

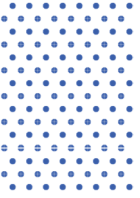
However, thanks to analysing European data available on-line (Cohesiondata: DG Regio, 6 March 2023), nearly €21 billion of ERDF funding was allocated to rural areas between 2016 and 2022. These sums are the result of adding the amounts filtered by area of action dedicated to rural and very sparsely populated areas.

A new objective of the ERDF 2021-2027 focused on rural development

Support for rural areas is a new feature of the 2021-2027 programming period in relation to previous periods. The approach to rural areas in regional programmes is concentrated within Specific Objective 5.2, dedicated to supporting development strategies in rural areas, but other Specific Objectives can be deployed, in particular through dedicated territorial tools, such as integrated territorial investments (ITI). Twelve management authorities are planning actions to support rural areas within the framework of SO 5.2 (amounting to nearly €289 million, via integrated territorial approaches). Several management authorities are also planning to support development of rural areas through other SO via dedicated territorial approaches. In total, nearly €402 million of ERDF funds is earmarked for rural areas and allocated to a variety of themes out of a total budget of €9.070 billion.

National and regional funding is still very present and a lever for European funds

With around €1 billion per year for several years now, the emblematic provision of equipment for rural areas (DETR), to which must be added the DSIL (provision for local investment), the FNADT (national fund for territorial development) and all of the various national programmes and calls for expression of interest (AMI) notably integrated into the rural agenda and now into the France Ruralités plan, and local authority programmes (regional and department councils, in particular), national and local public funds under common law remain a significant source of funding for rural areas.



THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE EAFRD FOR RURAL PLAYERS HIGHLIGHTED BY A WIDE RANGE OF FUNDING AND PROJECT SPONSORS

A NECESSARY REGIONAL ADAPTATION OF THE EAFRD WHICH HAS ENCOURAGED THE CONCENTRATION OF FUNDS

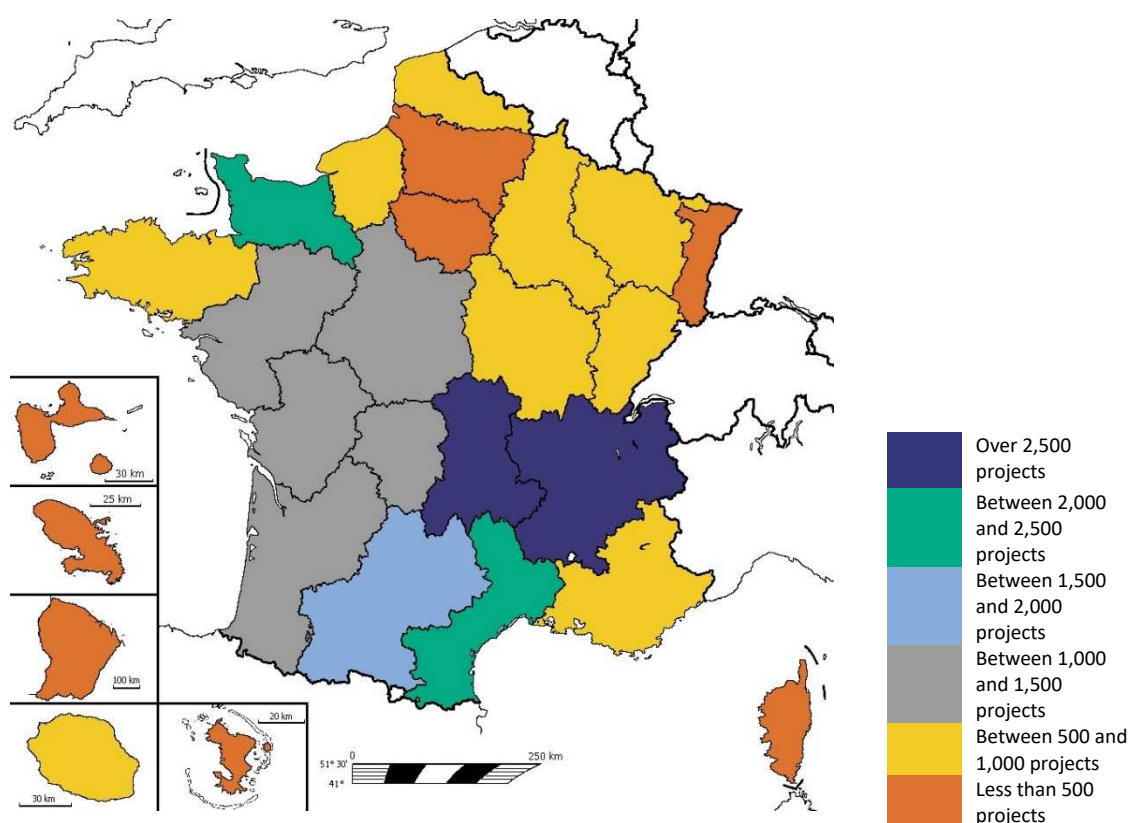
Depending on the local context, not all measures were selected in all RRDs and their commitment has evolved over the programming period. On average, 10.6 % of the EAFRD budget was committed to the measures in the study, i.e. €1.11 billion.

The concentration of funds and the commitment of EAFRD appropriations at the end of the European programming period show the determination of the parties involved in rural areas and public policy in France to revive the countryside and support local initiatives. One factor of these measures is that local initiatives involve and engage local stakeholders as much as possible in the creation of territorial strategies on a variety of themes that affect the daily life of residents, both in their personal and professional activities, and contribute to the social and territorial cohesion of rural areas. Measures 7, 16 and 19 are the three most transposable and adaptable EAFRD measures at territorial level and make way for multi-sectoral and collective projects.

This concentration of projects under measures 7, 16 and 19 can also be seen in the number of projects approved. Out of the 29,563 projects approved under all measures in the study, 80% concerned these three measures (of which 87% under Measure 19).

From a regional point of view, the distribution of projects approved under all of these measures by RRD is proportional to the EAFRD budget committed. Thus, the RRD of Auvergne (3,817 projects), Rhône Alpes (4,813 projects) and Midi-Pyrénées (2,001 projects) have the highest number of projects approved nationwide. (map below)

Number of projects approved by regional rural development programmes (RRDP)



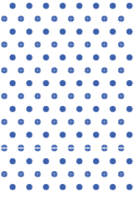
Source: ASP data, US-ODR processing, Inrae, January 2023

A WIDE RANGE OF CO-FUNDERS, WHICH COMPLICATES COORDINATION

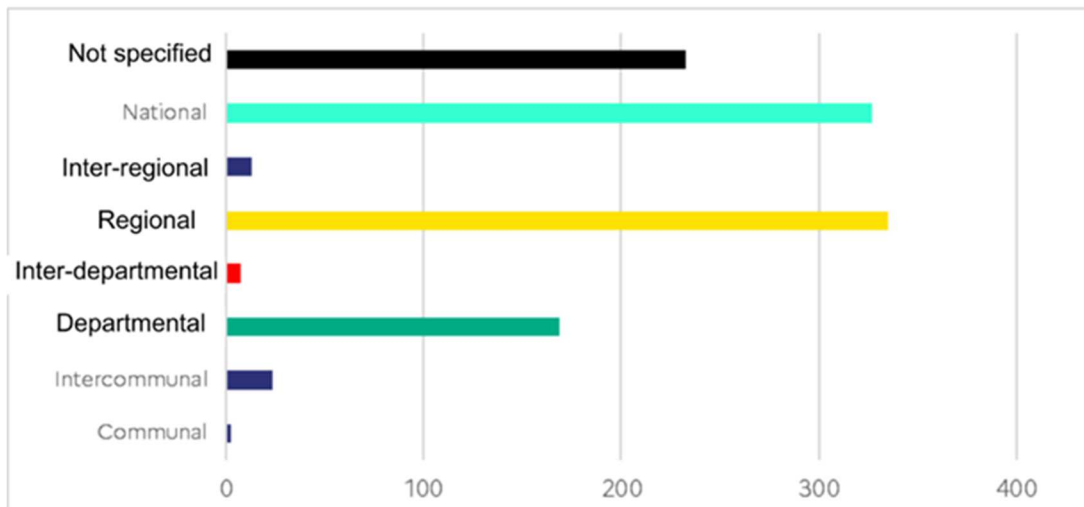
The principle of additionality means that compulsory public co-funding (excluding the project owner) is required in order to "call in" EAFRD funding. This may be provided directly by the project sponsor, as part of a public structure, or through public co-funding by another public body, which may be national, regional, departmental or local.

Therefore, nearly €1.1 billion of public co-funding has been mobilised under the measures in the study in return for EAFRD funding.

The EAFRD, although organised by region, is still mainly co-funded by the State if all measures are taken into account. However, the measures examined in this study show that regional co-funding is the main source of public funding in return for the EAFRD.



Breakdown of the main co-funders within the framework of EAFRD 2014-2022 by sum committed (in € million)



Source: ASP (OSIRIS) data, traitement US-ODR processing, January 2023

DIFFERENT TYPES OF PROJECT SPONSORS DEPENDING ON THE MEASURE

The examination of ASP data processed by US-ODR, INRAE, on the analysis of the SIRET numbers of EAFRD beneficiaries shows that around 12,000 beneficiaries have submitted an EAFRD project for all of the measures studied. Beneficiaries mean direct beneficiaries of EAFRD aid. This study does not take into account the indirect beneficiaries of projects funded, which represent a substantially larger total number of beneficiaries. Although the figures show a very small imbalance in project sponsorship, we can see that the difference between public-sector project sponsors increases substantially for measures 7 and 19, where 80% of projects have public-sector sponsors. This data reinforces the analysis of the impact of public-sector co-funding in return for EAFRD.

Out of the 29,714 projects approved that were analysed, nearly 42% are sponsored by public structures, 26% by private structures, 18% by associations and 14% by natural persons. This is also reflected in the sums committed and paid. Concerning projects sponsored by natural persons, the data collected shows that 69% are put forward by men compared to 31% by women, and that the average age is 47 and that project sponsorship by individuals mainly concerns measures 3 and 19.



DIFFERENT THEME-BASED PERSPECTIVES ON EUROPEAN FUNDS AND THE FRENCH RURAL AGENDA

A SUBJECT FIELD BROADER THAN THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In order to be able to converge RRDP measures with measures of the rural development agenda, excluding agriculture (including measures 7, 16 and 19, and others), and to group them into subject areas, the study was based on the typology of projects collected by the Rural Development Observatory from the Agence de Services et de Paiement (which included the title of the projects in question), and the two surveys carried out with the regional councils and Local Action Groups.

With regard to the data collected and the collection tools available for European funds, the theme-based analysis focuses on the specific study conducted on Measure 19 "LEADER", which represents 72% of the projects approved under the measures selected. According to the survey conducted on Local Action Groups, it is estimated that 6,100 projects out of the 20,545 projects approved under measure 19 fall within the scope of the study, i.e. €218 million of EAFRD funding committed.

RURAL AGENDA SCHEMES ARE KNOWN BUT HAVE LIMITED LINKS WITH THE EAFRD

While a large majority of Local Action Groups say they are familiar with the main rural agenda schemes, more than half emphasise the lack of coordination between the schemes implemented in rural areas and their local development strategies for 2014-2022.

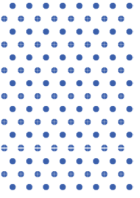
Digital technology

A major focus for rural areas funded by European

Digital technology is a cross-cutting theme in European funding. Although it is not the subject of a dedicated EAFRD measure, digital technology is one of the filters, along with sustainable development, used in all projects. Digital technology is a theme that is often included in the division between the ERDF and EAFRD. Given the amounts committed, the regions mainly have access to this theme via the ERDF.

In the 2014-2022 EAFRD program, digital technology was mainly addressed under measure 19. According to the Gal survey, nearly 780 projects representing 20 million euros of EAFRD funding have been developed in this area. According to the study of measure 19 of the French Rural Network, 34 Gal chose to intervene on the issue of digital and new technologies.

Overall, the EAFRD, via measure 19, has been involved in local actions linked to hardware investment and the deployment of digital third places. The ERDF supported more structuring investments, such as broadband deployment, or the development of teleconsultation to facilitate access to healthcare services.



In comparison, digital technology was financed to the tune of 18.8 million euros by national DTER - DSIL schemes over the same period.

Project example: "L'Etabli: Fab Lab" by Université du Temps Libres Landes Côté Sud (measure 19)

L'Etabli is a Fab Lab for entrepreneurs, designers, artists, individuals, students and DIY fans. It is an open platform consisting of information, electronic and machining equipment for creating, repairing or prototyping.



Youth

An area often handled indirectly

While half of the RRDPs targeted the need to develop projects for young people in their SWOT analyses, this subject appears to be more cross-cutting, a recurring selection criterion and does not appear explicitly in the project typology. Although many projects related to educating and training young people have been covered via the European Social Fund, youth has been covered in the EAFRD through material investments for projects linked to sport, culture, childhood and awareness-raising. According to the study carried out for Measure 19, 960 projects developed under this measure have been supported, amounting to €30 million of EAFRD funding.

Project example: Youth centre in Crots (Measure 19)

The association Les Villages des jeunes rallied round to renovate a house in which to host four to six vocational trainees. Thanks to a local partnership with a training organisation, trainees on long-term courses in "Heritage Restoration" and who are having trouble finding accommodation will be able to live in a house that has been renovated sustainably.



Mobility

EAFRD intervention complementary to regional and national policies

Like digital technology, the subject of mobility is often on the dividing line between the ERDF and the EAFRD. In view of the sums committed, the regions mainly have access to this subject through the ERDF. Only 20% of the regions have committed to this subject via EAFRD.

The subject of soft mobility is only covered under Measure 19, with nearly 1,400 projects representing €37 million of EAFRD funding. Mobility is often dealt with through the creation of soft connections, the acquisition of shared electric equipment, the deployment of bicycles and the funding of studies.

The ERDF has funded larger infrastructure (often as part of studies funded by the EAFRD). This takes the form of programmes to restructure roads and to develop cycling infrastructure and pedestrian routes. The aim is to support the roll-out of innovative mobility solutions through the development of charging or fuelling infrastructure for carbon-free mobility, but also to support multi-modality in rural areas through the development of interconnecting points and car-pooling areas.

Project example: Shared communal car in Villerouge-Termenès (Measure 19) - Aude

The municipality of Villerouge-Termenès and its residents have opted for an innovative mobility service: a shared electric car available to residents of the municipality.



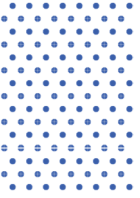
Access to care / Assistance for the ageing population

An under-developed subject within the framework of the EAFRD despite the health crisis.

Although mainly a matter for Member States, European funds play an important role in funding health projects and programmes in European Union Member States. They contribute to reinforcing health infrastructure, promoting medical research and supporting initiatives to improve public health.

During the EAFRD 2014-2022 programming period, several regions funded projects aiming to improve access to health services in rural areas via the construction and rehabilitation of local public health facilities and infrastructure (such as multi-professional health centres, health centres and medical and social establishments, etc.).

In the EAFRD 2014-2022 programming period, digital technology was mainly covered under measures 19 and 7. According to the survey conducted on LAGs, nearly 280 projects representing €39 million of EAFRD funding have been developed in relation to this subject. Among the projects funded, there are many that finance, in particular, work necessary to create a medical centre in which doctors can easily set up practice, and the development of remote consultations.



Project example: Development of a medical centre in Chalus (Measure 7) – Haute Vienne

The municipality of Chalus (1,700 residents), accompanied by Mutualité française, developed a project for a medical centre in a vast building close to the village centre, acquired in 2014. The project brought medical and paramedical professions together in a single unit that complies with recent standards relating to accessibility, and has solved problems related to practitioners retiring.



Accessibility of services to the public

An important subject for EAFRD funding that underlines real expectations of rural areas

Revitalisation (in the broadest sense) of rural areas is an important issue in terms of the budget dedicated to rural areas. In EAFRD regional programmes, support for the revitalisation of rural areas is reflected in the development of public spaces and local facilities in these areas, as well as improved access to services.

Accessibility of services to the public is geared towards maintaining or reinforcing all commercial and non-commercial services considered to be a necessity for residents. We can approach services to the public by levels of service (local, intermediate, central), by baskets of services (everyday life, parents, young people, etc.) or by families of services (public services, health, shops, etc.). Based on EAFRD's definition, services to the public represent around 3,000 projects, i.e. the vast majority of projects under Measure 7, and over 1,000 projects funded under Measure 19 for the amount of over €200 million. This is the most significant subject funded by the EAFRD's "rural development" measures.

This project dynamic is supported by the DETR-DSIL provision which funds local projects related to this subject to the tune of €213 million.

Project example: Proxibus, le coin malin des anciens (Measure 19) - Aube

The ADMR federation in Aube (home help in rural areas) has developed a range of services for senior residents in response to the current challenges of ageing well and combating isolation. The operation involves the acquisition of a utility vehicle fitted out to accommodate a few people and designed to be a mobile meeting place to complement Public Services Centres (MSAP).





Small shops

A major focus for rural areas funded by European funds

Support to revitalise rural areas also involves supporting businesses and, more widely, economic activities in these areas. Within the framework of the EAFRD, this involves programmes that aim to revitalise local commerce (in particular, the creation and modernisation of commercial and artisanal premises), or traditional measures for business creation (support for innovative local approaches, development of entrepreneurship, etc.). According to the raw data source of DG Regio, €576 million of ERDF funding has been committed in seven regions.

The EAFRD also contributes to the dynamics of rural agenda measures, in particular the development of small shops through offering support for material investment to maintain, restore or create shops, often multi-service, in isolated areas, with the aim of regenerating social ties within the population and developing local production.

Although the development of small shops could have been processed under measures 3 and 16, the areas developed correspond to projects funded solely under measures 7 and 19. According to the survey conducted on LAGs, nearly 1,600 projects representing €42 million of EAFRD funding have been approved under this subject. The projects funded include a number of grocery stores and multi-service cafés.

Project example: Eco-friendly and community laundry-grocery in Mamoudzou (Measure 19) - Mayotte

The eco-friendly and community laundry-grocery is a multi-service, community and sustainable grocery shop (laundry, grocery store, place for recycling and raising environmental awareness) set up in 2016 by the Yes We Can Nette association. It acts to protect the environment and water resources from a social and territorial perspective.





RECOMMENDATIONS

DEVELOP MONITORING AND EVALUATION TOOLS FOR RURAL PROOFING

The analysis of the data made available within the framework of this study highlights a shortcoming in analytical tools available to assess EAFRD commitments. The terminology and numerical study, as well as the lack of data on the inclusion of rural development in the ERDF 2014-2022, only serve to reinforce this shortcoming. The regionalised instrumentation of the EAFRD management tool for the 2023-2027 programming period could potentially reinforce a lack of legibility on the national scale. At a time when the European Commission wants to reinforce the mechanisms for evaluating European funds and when this study "Comparative Views of European funds" identifies the use of EAFRD 2014-2022 funds for the objectives of the French rural agenda, it seems essential to anticipate evaluations and create new tools adapted to the range of projects funded by the EAFRD and ERDF.

This would improve understanding of European funds by rural areas and strengthen the links between future rural development policies and structural funds.

SET UP AUTOMATIC DEDICATED CO-FUNDING IN RETURN FOR EAFRD RURAL DEVELOPMENT MEASURES

One of the main obstacles highlighted in all studies and assessments carried out during previous programming periods is the compulsory public co-funding in return for EAFRD funding. The financing plan for operations is a particular challenge due to the multitude of public co-funding available, as shown by this study. The creation of a new dedicated fund by the State or management authorities would make it possible to co-fund projects supported in particular by LEADER Measure 19, which focuses on this issue with an identical instruction scheme. The creation of this dedicated budget would simplify public co-funding for project sponsors and would support the development of rural areas by being based on the fundamentals of LEADER: local governance, bottom-up approach, innovation, multi-sectoral projects, public-private partnerships. This fund could be financed by earmarking DETR/FSIL commitments in particular.

DEVELOP LINKS BETWEEN RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND EUROPEAN FUNDS

The European Rural Pact underlines the need to encourage links at the European, national, regional and local levels to deal with the integrated development of rural areas. As with the European Rural Pact, it seems essential to improve the links between the French rural agenda and European, regional and local policies. Although rural areas and management authorities are familiar with the mechanisms of the French rural agenda, today the links are insufficient to enable a shared and collective vision of rural development that meets the expectations of residents in rural areas. The role of Local Action Groups needs to be recognised and strengthened, and territorial engineering needs to be supported as, like the LEADER programme or the Petites Villes de Demain programme, this facilitates knowledge of and access to the various funds and the coordination of all European, national, regional and local schemes.



SUMMARY

This study "Comparative Views of French rural development: the use of the EAFRD 2014-2022 fund for the objectives of the French rural agenda" shows that although the links between the EAFRD and regional rural development policies, including for example measures of the French rural agenda, cannot always be measured due to the tools in place, it is possible to conclude that European funds contribute to the financing of the French rural agenda. However, it is necessary to strengthen the complementarity of EAFRD territorial measures. As the study shows, rural development accounts for only a small proportion of European funding in view of the challenges faced by rural areas. It is therefore necessary to strengthen links with rural development policies in France in order to increase the effects and achieve the objectives.

To develop real coherence and increase the efficiency of rural development policies, and in particular the French rural agenda, it is necessary to develop both a certain number of tools in order to measure qualitatively and quantitatively the impact of EAFRD and European funds in general on rural areas and thus encourage rural proofing, and to implement measures and support systems to encourage their complementarity.

COMPRENDRE

COMPARATIVE VIEWS OF EUROPEAN FUNDS AND THE FRENCH RURAL AGENDA



At the end of the 2014-2022 EAFRD programming period and in the context of the transition from the French « Rural Agenda » to the « France ruralités » plan, the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (ANCT) intended to better measure the contribution made by the EAFRD and the ERDF for the development of rural areas in matters such as mobility, public services, access to healthcare, small businesses, etc.

To this end, the ANCT has commissioned Leader France to carry out a study on these topics.

National and regional French partners were brought together through a steering committee responsible for monitoring the study. The study is based on data from the Rural Development Observatory, the French Ministry of Agriculture and Food, as well as interviews and questionnaires conducted by Leader France with local action groups (LAGs) and the French regions (EAFRD managing authorities).

